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A VERY MAD WORLD.

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WARD & DOWNEY, PUBLISHERS, LONDON.

# A VERY MAD WORLD:

OR,

MYSELF AND MY NEIGHBOUR FAIR.

BY

FRANK HUDSON,

AUTHOR OF

"THE LAST HURDLE: A STORY OF SPORTING AND COURTING,"  
"THE ORIGIN OF PLUM PUDDING," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TO

M. H.

This Book is Dedicated,





# A VERY MAD WORLD.

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## Book 2.

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### CHAPTER I.

MISS CARRIE DIXON OF NEW YORK STATE.

CHRISTMAS is at hand once again, this being the fourteenth of December; and a regular old-fashioned Christmas season to boot, with snow lying inches deep o'er hill and dale, and skating parties being in full swing all over the country. It is said that a snowy winter is far healthier than a mild one, and possibly the air is purer while the ground is hard and white. There is *one* person who will agree that the snow is the healthiest for

*him*—Monsieur Reynard. Hunting has ceased all over England, save in one or two of the extreme southern counties, for the past month.

I can see from my library windows a whole colony of half-famished Norway felts on an elm tree in the park. I'll go and have a shot at them.

There! see how the instinct for slaughter asserts itself the instant I catch sight of a few half-starved and defenceless foreigners. Like Macbeth, I want to murder my guests. Ah! dear me, I wonder how many thousand years of time it will take to render the best and holiest of the Anglo-Saxon race fit to enter the kingdom of Heaven? Well, let my good, charitable instincts—if I possess any—rise to the occasion, and instead of treating the poor wayfarers who have sought the sanctuary of my private park to a charge of small shot, let me treat them to a generous banquet after their long and rough sea-

voyage. They, you see, like all foreigners, flock to England when there is nothing for them to eat in their own country. I wonder if any distinctly German birds arrive here? The question is an interesting one.

With a sieve filled with grain I hasten towards the tree, walking more slowly as I approach nearer to it. I shake the grain round the trunk and then walk quietly away. Turning when a little way I beheld the poor creatures down on the snow ravenously picking up the grateful food. Ah! my friends, you will digest that better than leaden pills. I feel quite happy as I see you all having your fill—but woe betide you if I was hungry and wanted a meal; I would have your blood, ay, your flesh and bones, my pretty speckled-breasted guests all the way from Norway.

At the front door I find a dog-cart in charge of a tiger in sky-blue livery. In the

hall, Jenkins stands with a card, which I take and read :

MISS CARRIE DIXON

(*of New York State*),

BEECHLEY WOLD.

I enter the drawing-room and there find a decidedly pretty, fair-haired, and blue-eyed young lady, toasting her toes at the bars of the fire-grate as she lies back in an easy-chair.

“Mr. Brownlow, I guess,” she says rising and giving her little head a nod. “You’ll excuse me taking possession during your absence, but fact is I drove over just to give a friendly call, and feeling it rather cold I told your man-servant to allow me to warm myself.”

All this is uttered rapidly and with a very pronounced New York twang.

“I am only too delighted to meet you, my dear madam,” I hasten to say ; “pray



resume your seat—too delighted I assure you.”

“Yes?” she remarks resuming her position of ease in the chair, and again burning the toe of her boot.

“And how do you like English country life?” I ask, sitting down opposite to her.

“Not much,” she answers; “it doesn’t kinder suit me at all. It is very refined, and exclusive and *English*; but give me free-born America, where one person is as good as another—as long as he, or she, has the dollars. Here you are all too stuck up.”

“All *what*, Miss Dixon?”

“Stuck up,” she answers, “touch-me-not sort of people. Afraid to say or do anything at all original or out of the common.”

She is right, this little Yankee girl toasting her toes. She has hit us off to a nicety, and she is quite aware of the fact, for smiling she continues :

“See, I know you all well. Take my

cousin the Duchess of Stanton now ; I guess she is ashamed of poor Uncle Butts, now that she has lived here long enough to become quite English, you know. She won't own *me* either, but I don't care a red cent. I know our coming to live at Beechley Wold has made her real mad. Ha ! ha ! and I'm real glad, so I tell you."

"I suppose there is no talk of the duchess returning to the Castle for Christmas?" I say.

"Oh, my, no ! she is still on the Continent, and her husband is away in the Rockies—*that's* English, you know," and she smiles a knowing little smile. "Ah ! wait until *I* marry a duke ! *I'll* keep him from wandering away from home, and don't you forget it ! My cousin the duchess isn't half a woman to stand it. They do say——" here she suddenly checks herself.

"The duchess is your father's brother's daughter, I presume," I say.

“Oh, my, no! My mother was Uncle Butts’ and the duchess’s father’s sister. *Now* do you understand?”

“I see; you are her grace’s cousin on the mother’s side?”

“You’ve struck it,” she exclaims. “Mother left London for America about four years after her brother (my uncle, and the father of my cousin the duchess). My cousin had a better time of it than me—was sent to a tip-top school in Boston, and all that, you know. My father was always too poor to give me a first class stuffing.”

“A what, Miss Dixon?”

“Stuffing—don’t you know what that means? Oh, you’re a regular greenhorn!” she cries with a merry laugh. “Why, stuffing is what you call cramming here. It’s all the same.”

“Of course it is,” I say.

She remains for luncheon, and then I see her to the dog-cart.

“Now, you skimander over and see us, mind,” she says. “Don’t you swallow what they tell you about Uncle Butts—he’s all right, I can tell you. Now listen,” here she speaks with splendidly assumed gravity; “upon my word and honour as a lady, he *does not* eat with his knife, or chew tobacco in the drawing-room!”

With a sly twinkle in her eye she mounts the dog-cart, takes the ribbons and starts off.

A well-meaning honest little creature as any I have met withal. If all Yankees were only half as nice, I would have nothing to say against them.





## CHAPTER II.

### TOM PIERCE EXCUSES HIMSELF.

PAUL JOYCE has never paid his promised visit to Brownlow. He replied to my note, stating that he would write and tell me when he was coming, but no letter has arrived up to this. Another delinquent is Tom Pierce, who was to have come down a month ago. However, his letter, to hand to day, fully excuses him. Here it is :

“Cohills Mansions, Notting Hill,

“London, Dec. 17.

“DEAR PHIL,

“I owe you an apology, and a very sincere one, for my failing to either go down to Brownlow as per arrangement or write and explain my absence. But I think the following thrilling narrative will explain all.

“ You know that I quitted Woodbourn—where I am due on the 24th—on the 3rd of November, and came up to London. I had arranged to leave again for your place on the 20th. Meantime some one departed this life and left Sam Eyre £1,000 a year, on the strength of which he took a house in the country. He invited Jack Brown and myself to spend a week with him, telling us that we should enjoy ourselves immensely, and that Jack could take splendid sketches, and I find many original characters. Accordingly Jack and I accepted. The house was situated about five miles from Ealing, Sam informed us. ‘ When you reach Ealing, take a cab and tell the driver to bring you to Stag Hall,’ he wrote. It was a wet evening when we started, and wetter still when the train drew up at Ealing. A solitary cab stood outside the station. We jumped into it, as the porter placed our two portmanteaus on the top.

“ ‘Where to, sir?’ asked the cabby.

“ ‘Stag Hall,’ I answered.

“ ‘Right, sir ; which way do I go?’

“ ‘Now how the devil do *we* know?’ I answered.

“ ‘Do you mean to say you don’t know where Stag Hall is?’ Jack cried in astonishment.

“ ‘Never ’eard o’ the bloomin’ place before,’ answered the cabby. ‘I say, Bill,’ to the porter, ‘do you know where Stag Hall is?’

“ ‘No,’ answered the porter. ‘But, hold on—a chap came from London a couple of months ago and took a house about five miles from here. It used to be called Stone Cottage, I think, but I believe he changed the name.’

“ ‘And which way do you go to it?’ asked the cabby.

“ ‘Oh! ’anged if I know?’ answered the porter ; ‘all I can say is that it is about five miles from here, I’m told, and lies some-

where off the main road.' This was pleasant news! Anyhow we got the cabby—under promise of a liberal reward—to drive along the main road, and chance the luck of finding some one who knew where we were going to—which was more than we knew ourselves. We drove along for about two hours stopping at every house in which we saw a light. We must have knocked at thirty doors that awful night; but no one seemed to know where Stag Hall was. At last the cab stopped in the darkest and muddiest part of the road, and the cabby dismounting, opened the door and requested us to get out.

“‘I’ve ’ad quite enough of this ’ere!’ he exclaimed in his gin-and-fog voice.

“‘How dare you, fellow!’ cried Jack. ‘Drive on instantly or I’ll call the police.’

“‘Call the police!’ repeated cabby. ‘So help me! I wish you could. We’re a bloomin’ long way from Bow Street here’

“ ‘Will you drive on, or will you *not*?’  
I asked.

“ ‘I will *not*, sir,’ he replied. ‘You took me from Ealing Station, you don’t know where you want to go to, the mare is done up, I’m wet to the skin, and I won’t play the game any longer.’

“So saying, he mounted the cab and removed our traps to the roadway. We paid him, and off he started.

“ ‘What the deuce are we to do now?’ cried Jack, as we stood in the pelting rain in the dark muddy road.

“ ‘’Pon my soul, I don’t know,’ I replied.

“While we were considering, something tumbled over Jack’s portmanteau, and a voice exclaimed :

“ ‘Why what in the name of all that’s infernal is that?’ It was Sam ! I think we were rather glad to see him. He had, wondering at our lateness, wandered forth to see if we were dead. He declared that the cabby

should be shot for leaving us in such a plight. 'It was only a month ago that I christened my place Stag Hall,' he remarked, 'but the cabby should have found it out nevertheless. However, come along, we have not far to go, that's one comfort.'

"He shouldered one of the portmanteaus, Jack took the other, while I carried his easel. We tramped along the road for a while, then turned up a narrow lane in which the mud was in great form—in fact it was three feet deep.

"'Have we very much further to go, old fellow?' inquired Jack, after falling into the side ditch three times.

"'No,' said Sam, 'we have only to cross two fields, jump a ditch, go over a small marsh and there we are!'

"'Is there no confounded road to Stag Hall?' asked Jack. 'Because if there is I think it would be as well to strike on to it. I daresay crossing fields, ditches and marshes

is very rural, not to say romantic, but for my part——’

“Here he vanished.

“‘Hanged if he isn’t into the ditch again!’ cried Sam in disgust. ‘You are evidently not accustomed to country life, Jack,’ he continued, as he pulled him out.

“‘No, thank Heaven!’ exclaimed Jack, as he shouldered the portmanteau once more.

“On we trudged through mud and rain and darkness. Looking back on that journey it seems like some hideous dream. How we got through that marsh is a mystery I never hope to solve.

“At last we reached a long whitewashed house, one story high, and apparently surrounded by an ocean of mud. This was Stag Hall!

“‘I have had it newly done-up,’ said Sam proudly. He referred to the whitewash. We remained in Stag Hall for three weeks—in bed. The doctor’s fees were thirty-five

guineas. He said he couldn't risk his life crossing that marsh six times for less. Now you know how it is that I neither wrote nor put in an appearance. Will see you at Christmas.

“Yours ever,

“TOM PIERCE.”

So much for Tom ; now I wonder if Paul will write. I hope he has not got into any mischief.





## CHAPTER III.

### I SIT BY THE FIRE.

I INTENDED going out after the duck and wild-geon to-day, one of my men having brought me the news that the east marsh was alive with those birds (they always flock there in hard weather). But the east wind is a little too pronounced, so I e'en stop at home at my ain fireside, and leave my feathered friends undisturbed.

Little Towers called yesterday, and never ceased anathematizing the frost and snow all the time he remained. The little creature is like a fish out of water because the hounds are idle, his saddle empty, and the foxes sleep in peace. *En passant*—I was once introduced to a very high and mighty Oriental personage, whom I found to be a man of great intelli-

gence and microscopic observation. Like all the wise men of the East who have learned the English language, he spoke it without the slightest trace of a foreign accent.

“Why do your people call us English mad devils?” I asked him.

“Why, because you are,” he answered smiling. I knew of course that he was perfectly right, but wanted to ascertain how he hit on the truth, and so I said:

“Yes, but *why* are we mad?”

“I will give you four reasons out of four hundred,” was his answer. “You are the most bloodthirsty nation on the earth; you shed blood for mere amusement—*we* only shed it for some deep purpose, such as revenge, ambition and the like. You English are not content unless you are killing something, if it is only a pigeon out of a trap. There is still too much of the Saxon and Dane about you. Again, your chief outdoor amusement consists of galloping on horseback with a

number of dogs, over hedges and ditches, after a poor animal called a fox, and when you see the wretched fagged-out creature torn to pieces by your dogs, you ride home satisfied to dinner. Remember, you do not hunt this fox for the sake of food. No, no; there would be sanity in that. Again, your chief indoor amusement seems to consist of taking a woman by the waist and twirling with her round and round a room while a band plays, until you are both tired and giddy, and then you both sit down panting on the stairs."

And then I said, "But are not you Easterns also mad in your way?"

"Very," he replied briskly.

"Now, what does your madness consist of?"

"In allowing you English to rule over us," he replied with a quiet smile.

But to return to little Towers. He told me he had thoughts of getting married, and on my asking him if he had fixed his eagle eye

on a suitable match, he hesitated, looked more foolish than ever, and then said, "I think I have, don't you know?"

It's the widow, of course! The little *idiot*, does he think he could manage such a self-willed, fiery, quick-tempered, clever and delightful little woman for one week? Wonder what he has done with Susan?

Talking of the widow, I wonder she has not called of late. Her cheery chat always seems to enliven me. What a blessing it is to be born with such spirits; it makes one's pilgrimage twice as easy.

I am beginning to feel uneasy about Paul Joyce. I cannot understand his long silence, and fear he is either ill or has left England. I hope to goodness he has not been fool enough to go lecturing in Germany or Russia. The idea of telling the people of either country that their rulers should be men of intellect, would scandalize the present monarchs to such an extent that poor Paul's head

would alone appease them. The trade of continental kings and emperors is a disgraceful monopoly; yet, somehow or another, it is not a concern which I would care about taking many shares in.

Perhaps Paul has gone over to his place in Ireland, though I think his lectures *there* would bring him to the plank bed and prison barber. There seems to be some idea in the Irish mind official that all public speaking is devilish, and as such to be put down by fire and sword. What a delightful country it must be to reside in!

Enter Jenkins with midday post. Ah, a letter from Paul at last!

“Caxton’s Inn,

“London, W.C.,

“Dec. 19th.

“DEAR PHIL,—

“I owe you a thousand apologies for my negligence in neither answering your last

welcome note nor in availing myself of your kind invitation. But I have been *so* busy. As you know by my last letter, I was in a horrible state of mind, and fearing I would do myself some harm, I made a mighty effort to pull myself together and write out my lecture on Intellectual Monarchy.

“Well, in due time the lecture was finished, and then ‘got by heart,’ as they say in Ireland. My next move was to hire the Tabard Hall, and announce in the press, and also by placards, that on Wednesday evening, the twenty-fifth of November, Mr. Paul Joyce would lecture on ‘Intellectual Kings’ in the Tabard Hall, Great Courtly Street, W.

“I had a very large audience—many, I expect, being misled by the title ‘Intellectual Kings,’ which gave them the impression that I was going to speak of Alfred the Great, Frederick the Great, and the few other rulers who had a fair amount of intellect. Had they known I was going to propound a new

and decidedly revolutionary doctrine, most of them would, I am convinced, have stopped away. Anyhow, the lecture took them by surprise—by storm, in fact. It was a GREAT success, Phil, and the Radical papers gave it a splendid notice—the others did not send any representatives. But never mind, they shall some day. Already there is a society forming by a number of young fellows, which is called the ‘Joyce Society,’ and which is formed for the sole purpose of propagating my doctrine. *It will rise.*

“And now I am going to accept your long-standing invitation, and will spend Christmas with you. I’ll start for Brownlow on the 23rd. Till then

“Believe me yours, as ever,

“PAUL JOYCE.”

So the ice is broken, and Paul has held forth as the apostle of Intellectual Monarchy. Well and good: there is something in the

thing, but will it ever come to a head? I am glad Paul is coming down for Christmas. I don't know why it should be, or how it is, but for some time back I have felt awfully discontented and restless. Restlessness is a horrible complaint. Have you ever noticed how restless dogs are when they are about to go mad? Man and dog are very much alike in that respect, only the dog sometimes goes madder than the man. I wonder if they took to shooting madmen with the same commendable alacrity which they display in shooting mad dogs, how many of us would be left to propagate our species? My dear sir (or madam), man would soon be as extinct as the dodo; for after shooting all their fellow creatures, as in duty bound, the shooters would have then to shoot each other.

All this time I have not opened the other letter lying on the salver. I see by the handwriting on the envelope that it is from Sydney Barton. Now to see what *he* has got to say.



“Falcoft’s Hotel,

“Brook Street,

“London, W.

“Dec. 19th.

“DEAR PHIL,—

“Have just met Paul Joyce, who told me he was going to Brownlow House for Christmas. I told him I wanted you over to Woodbourn for that season of holly and ivy, and that he must come also. So ‘come along do;’ what the deuce would you two find to do with yourselves in your wilderness of a house? Remember, I expect you both; so will the dad and Fanny. I leave for home with the gay and festive Tom on Thursday evening.

“Yours, in haste,

“SYD.”

Wants Paul and I over to Woodbourn for Christmas, does he? Well, so be it—it will be more lively for Paul.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PAUL AGREES WITH ME.

PAUL came down yesterday, looking brighter and better than I have seen him for some time: the success of his lecture seems to have roused him for a time from his deep sorrow. For a *time*, I say; it is hopeless to think of him ever being really and truly happy and free from remorse in this life. I could never understand Tennyson's philosophy when he wrote:

"'Tis better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all."

Now I think it must be very pleasant to have loved and *won*, and certainly ten times better than to have never loved at all. But how *can* it—or *could* it—be better to have loved and

*lost* than to have remained heart-free? If a man has not loved a woman, and lost her, he is quite free from all that horrible feeling of hopelessness and misery and weariness of this life. No, no, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, your philosophy is altogether wrong. I think Paul's kind of loss—I mean, loss through one's *own* fault—must be the hardest to bear. The remorse and constant self-judging, mingled with the sad, sad thought, *not* that “it *might* have been,” but that “it *could* have been,” must be simply torture.

However, I intend keeping Paul, as long as he is here, on another tack. He is seated opposite to me, smoking, just now.

“You know, Phil,” he says, “I have come to the conclusion that the greatest ruffian who ever existed was James the Second.”

“You have?”

“Yes; no French king—not even the worst of the Louis's—ever approached Reigh Shamus of blessed and Holy Roman memory. The

man's innate love of cruelty was simply fiendish. Think of all his foul and bloody murders! and all in the name of religion. Heavens, Phil! think of that—*all* in the name of religion."

"Yes, I must agree with you that religion has been a cloak for many a cruel and murderous deed," I say.

"Ah, you may well say that, Phil," and Paul rises and begins his caged-tiger march up and down. "But think of the royal dastard having those two Scotch girls drowned in the Solway because they refused to embrace the Roman Catholic religion. There was a cursed deed! You remember, he had them tied to stakes in the sand at low water. On came the advancing tide; long ere it was in sight the poor doomed girls heard its roar as it rushed through the mouth of the estuary, but they never quailed, God bless them!—they never quailed, and the holy king's

emissaries saw the waters close over their heads."

"Yes, Paul, but don't you see, it was through the cruelties of this man that we came to think of our Bill of Rights, our Prince of Orange, and our subsequent Constitutional Government. You see, out of evil cometh good."

"Yes," he says, resuming his seat, "and yet, Phil, look at the frightful laws which were enacted by our Reformed Parliament? If James persecuted the Protestants *prerogatorily*, his successor, or rather his successor's Lords and Commons, persecuted the Roman Catholics *constitutionally!*" and he smiles at the word. Then, after a pause, "Does it not seem terrible to you now, when you read of men being hanged for the most petty larcenies?"

"Certainly it does."

"Well," leaning forward towards me, "don't you think, or rather, don't you *know*,

that there are many laws in force now, and many customs, which to our great great grand-children will seem terrible—eh?”

“Why, of course,” I reply. “Different times, different manners. What is sense to us, will appear nonsense to our descendants.”

“You mean we live in a fool’s paradise?”

“No, I mean we live in a madman’s paradise, where everything we pride ourselves on is utterly insane. Our mad descendants will discover this, but will be totally blind to their own stock of mad rules and regulations, which will remain for *their* remote descendants to smile, wonder or shudder at. And so on until the end.”

“Then you still stick to your theory that we are all mad?” he says.

“Certainly I do.”

“By Heaven! Phil, you are right.”

\* \* \* \* \*

By-and-by, when I am thinking of going

to bed, my housekeeper enters. With a preparatory cough she says :

“I have had a letter from Sarjint Murphy, sur.”

“Ah, indeed; pray who might he be, Mrs. Murphy?” I ask.

“My son, sur,” she replies, evidently surprised at my ignorance.

“Oh, your son?”

“Yes, sur; don’t you remember my telling you that my son was made a corporal?”

“Yes, I think I do remember something about it.”

“Yes, sur; well, now they have made him a full sarjint,” and Mrs. Murphy’s eyes glow with pride.

“Oh, I’m very glad to hear it, Mrs. Murphy.”

“Yes, sur; and I was thinking that as you were going away for Christmas, I would make bold to ask your permission to have my son here to spend the day with me.”

“Certainly, Mrs. Murphy ; by all means.”

“Thank you very much, sur.” And my housekeeper retires in delight.

And yet that woman refused to open her son’s letters while he was a mere private !

We go over to Woodbourn to-morrow





## CHAPTER V.

### CHRISTMAS *À LA MODE.*

I DON'T know how it is, but I never can moralize in Woodbourn. Now this is the more curious, when I come to remember that if there is one place more than another where everybody is very mad, it is Woodbourn. Yet, such being the case, still I cannot moralize. Instead of moralizing, I find myself giving way to just the same amount of madness as the rest of them. Now this beautiful nonsense called Christmas is in full swing here. Not even the knowledge that Aunt Minerva hovers above us can restrain us from doing and saying the most inane things.

Outside, the snow is slowly melting away, and ever and anon, during a lucid interval

of silence, we can hear the drip, drip, drip, as it falls from the roof. Yes, Monsieur Reynard will be called upon to-morrow by little Towers and his merry men.

Our Christmas dinner is over, we have drunk to the health of absent friends, and all the rest of it, and are now all seated round the drawing-room fire—Fanny, Paul, the squire, Sydney, Tom and myself. Fanny has been singing us Sullivan's latest ballad, the squire has told his celebrated hunting-story—he has told it every Christmas for goodness knows how many years—Paul has related his adventures on a Welsh mountain, Syd has given us a graphic description of a bull-fight in Madrid, I have told a rollicking Irish tale, and now it is Tom's turn.

“Now, Tom,” Syd cries, “keep the ball rolling. What's the use of Christmas if you can't tell lies?”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” replies Tom

with dignity. "Be pleased to understand that veracity is my great speciality. In fact, General George Washington was an Ananias in comparison to me."

"Hear, hear!" from us all.

"Now what would you like me to tell of?"

"Give us a good ghost story, Tom," says the squire. "Not too long, as I want to go and have my smoke."

"A short ghost story—very well," says Tom, "I will give an account of a meeting of the Ghost Club."

"The what club?" asks his uncle.

"The Ghost Club—a very old-established club indeed."

"Go ahead."

And Tom commences: "It was Christmas Eve, and the members of the Ghost Club were holding their annual meeting in the old ruinous castle on the top of the bleak hill. The moonshine through the broken roof and windows shed a flood of silvery

light on the grassy floor of the banqueting hall, where the ghosts sat round on stones. There were present, the Ghost of Hamlet's Father, who was president, the Phantom Knight, all shining bright, the Headless Horseman, the Castle Spectre, the Spectre Bridegroom, the White Horseman, the Red Baron, and numerous other ghosts of lesser note. After some general preliminary discussion, the Ghost of Hamlet's Father rose and said: 'List, list; oh, list, ye brother ghosts! For the two hundred and fifty-eighth time do we meet here on Christmas Eve. This is a very conservative club——'

“‘Hear, hear!’ cried the Red Baron.

“‘Silence,’ exclaimed the Phantom Knight, and the president continued: ‘Brother Ghosts, since we last met we have each by our own individual efforts accomplished good work (cheers). I will only make mention of a poacher frightened out of his wits by the Headless Horseman (cheers), a burglar ditto

ditto by the Castle Spectre (cheers), an old and very miserable miser knocked into a fit by the Red Baron (loud cheers and a cry of "good old Baron"), and a runaway couple pursued for miles by the White Horseman (cheers). As for my own efforts (loud and prolonged cheers) I have appeared to some thousands of persons nightly in several parts of England.'

"So saying the Ghost of Hamlet's Father resumed his seat amidst great cheering. The Red Baron then rose and proposed a vote of thanks to their worthy president, which was carried unanimously. After a graceful reply from the president, the Phantom Knight stood up and said: 'Brother Ghosts, I have lately heard of one who I think ought to be elected a member of this club, so with your permission I will propose his name.'

"'Who is he?' cried several of the ghosts.

“‘The Ghost of a Penny,’ replied the Phantom Knight.

“Hereupon there was general groaning from all sides, and the Phantom Knight drew his phantom sword.

“‘Order, order!’ cried the Ghost of Hamlet’s Father gravely. The Phantom Knight replaced his phantom sword and sat down.

“‘Brother Ghosts,’ said the Ghost of Hamlet’s Father, rising, ‘the Phantom Knight wishes to introduce a new member, called the Ghost of a Penny. Now what in the name of tombstones is the Ghost of a Penny?’

“‘Hear, hear!’ cried several members.

“‘Even a live penny is not of very much importance by itself,’ continued the president; ‘and as for the ghost of one—has the Phantom Knight ever met it?’

“‘I said I had *heard* of it,’ said the Phantom Knight scowling.

“‘Our brother member says he has *heard* of it,’ says the president; ‘well, we cannot

go by mere hearsay in this club, therefore I say that the Ghost of a Penny is not a fit and proper candidate for membership.'

"The speaker resumed his seat. A burst of loud cheering echoed all over the place. Up jumped the Phantom Knight, out sprang his phantom sword, and—even then the morning cock crowed loud, and the members all vanished."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Very good ghost story indeed, Tom," says the squire as we enter the billiard room. "Did you make it out of your own head, eh?" He turns round to look at Tom—but Tom is not there. Neither is Fanny.

And it's oh! the mistletoe bough, Though it frequently leads to a row. But Christmas is here, so give it a cheer, Hurrah! for the mistletoe bough.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MISS DIXON ASTONISHES THE SQUIRE.

How quickly the last five days have passed here to be sure ! Time seems to have flown as it was wont to fly in the holidays of my youth, which proves that I am thoroughly enjoying myself.

The frost and snow have vanished, leaving a very moist and decidedly chilly atmosphere behind it ; yet damp and cold as it is, we five—Fanny, Paul, Tom, Syd and myself—have been for a good walk through the home park and consequently are enjoying our lunch with “rare gusto,” as Ben Bantim would put it. By the way, that very unwilling footman’s understudy is back again among his dogs, and if whistling and singing snatches of popular music-hall ditties are a



sign of happiness, he must be in the seventh heaven of bliss.

“You say you are going to hunt to-morrow, Syd,” says the squire.

“Yes,” answers his son, “Phil and I; by the way, do you hunt, Paul?”

“Not much of late,” replies the latter. “However, if you can spare me a mount, I shall be pleased to take part in the excitement of the chase.”

“Let me see—where is the meet to be?” I ask.

“Roundwood, about two miles from here,” Syd informs me.

“I cannot, for my life, discover what pleasure you men find in hunting,” Fanny says presently. “Do you hunt, Tom?”

“No,” answers the embryo Shakespeare promptly; “riding over hedges and ditches—especially through a strange country—is not to my liking. And even when I know every inch of the country, as in Essex, I can see

nothing in the sport. In fact, there *is* nothing in it."

"So *I* say," Fanny remarks with emphasis.

"Rubbish!" exclaims her brother. "Hunting is one of the grandest amusements on the face of the earth."

"And one of the most healthy," says the squire; "most healthy."

"Yes, papa, very healthy," Fanny says to him with a quiet smile. "Only four Nimrods broke their collar-bones here last season."

"Anyhow, Phil, Paul and myself are going out to-morrow," Syd exclaims. "That is settled. You, dad, are coming also, of course?"

"Yes," answers the squire, "I'll be with you."

"I hope you will all have a pleasant day," remarks Fanny, "and that the fox will enjoy the fun also."

"How do you know he won't—eh? Tell me that, miss?" cries the squire.

“How *can* I, papa?” she answers. “How can any one tell what the poor animal feels until the ‘Revelations of a Mangled Fox’ are published?”

“Fanny scores one,” says Tom.

“And pray what are you going to do with yourself all day to-morrow?” the squire asks, looking towards his nephew, while Fanny looks hard at her plate.

“Who, I?” Tom inquires calmly. “Oh! I’m going to sit at home here and work up some of the characters for my comedy.”

Presently a brougham drives up, and out pop Mrs. Wilson and Miss Dixon (of New York State).

“I’ve brought Miss Dixon with me to wish you all a happy new year,” says the little widow, after introducing her companion.

And then we all sit round the great big bright fire in the drawing-room, and have what Tom would call “a jolly little jabber” on things in general. In animal spirits,

shrewdness, brightness and merry laughter, the widow and her Yankee companion are well matched, though the widow has a little the best of it. What an amount of animation and humour is betrayed in those dimples and sparkling eyes! The old squire loses his worried, peppery look, and beams with geniality as he listens to her silvery tongue. Presently the conversation drifts to hunting—it always does in country houses.

“Do you hunt, Miss Dixon?” Paul asks.

“Never since I climbed the trees to hunt for birds’ nests in New York State,” she replies. “I guess I’d fall slick off the horse when we got to a fence.”

“Oh, you could easily learn to ride,” Fanny says, “if you care about it. I confess *I* don’t.”

“Oh, I *do*,” exclaims Miss Dixon, “at least, I fancy I should. I think hunting is a real elegant amusement.”

"So it is," says the widow, looking at me.  
"I'm going out to-morrow."

"Oh, you are?" I say, "so am I."

"Are you? Oh, then, we will fly together  
o'er the downs, as the poet says."

"You used to be a flier, Mrs. Wilson," the  
squire says.

"Yes, but I'm beginning to get old now,"  
she says, dimpling considerably.

"Nonsense," he exclaims, "you never  
looked younger in your life—never."

"Hear, hear!" exclaims Miss Dixon, of New  
York State, "I think Mrs. Wilson is a daisy."

"No, no, a rose," Tom suggests.

"Now that will do," cries the widow,  
flushing with pleasure, "just cease your  
comparisons, or I'll have Mr. Brownlow  
comparing me to a nettle in a moment."

I disclaim any such intention, and then  
the topic changes to Shakespeare and the  
musical glasses, or in other words becomes  
generally mixed.

“Are you fond of the theatre, Miss Dixon?”  
Fanny asks.

“Oh, my, yes! Awfully fond of it. Do you know, I kinder think I could act real well if I was stuffed?”

I don't know whether it is the word itself, or the bewildered look it brings to the squire's face, which makes us all quite unable to restrain a laugh. As for Mrs. Wilson, she has actually to keep her handkerchief to her mouth as if suffering from tooth-ache.

“If you were *what*?” asks the squire.

“Stuffed,” replies Miss Dixon. “Why, my goodness, don't you know what that means?”

“Miss Dixon means crammed, or coached,”  
I explain.

“Right you are,” cries Miss Dixon. “Yes, I reckon I'd make some of them sit up.”

This causes another ripple of laughter: the girl's Yankeeisms are simply delightfully funny.

“Sit up where?” asks the squire, looking again bewildered.

“Oh, anywhere,” snaps Miss Dixon sharply, evidently beginning to feel annoyed at our hilarity. Then turning to Fanny she asks: “Say, have you seen Miss Fayncourt?” A query which curiously enough makes Sydney and Tom exchange rapid glances.

“No, but I have heard of her,” Fanny replies.

“Oh, she is terrific,” exclaims Miss Dixon.

“My! she takes the cake.”

“She takes the what?” asks the squire, but a regular peal of laughter follows and the question is not answered. And then Mrs. Wilson intimates that it is time to end their visit.

While in the hall, Miss Minerva walks slowly down the front stairs, and pausing at the last step, glares at Miss Dixon, who whispers to me, “It’s alive.”

“My sister, Miss Dixon,” says the squire in a flurry.

“How do *you* do, ma’am?” asks Miss Dixon, advancing.

“How dare you call me *ma’am*?” haughtily replies Miss Minerva. “I do not want to know you,” and she slowly walks into the morning-room.

“Why, confound it, Minerva, what the ——?” here he rushes into the room after her, and bangs the door. We all hasten on to the steps.

“I must sincerely apologize for my aunt’s rudeness, Miss Dixon,” says poor Syd, blushing with annoyance and shame; “she is a confirmed invalid, and her continued ill-health has made her quite eccentric and odd.”

“Ah! poor old lady, she’s all right,” replies Miss Dixon; “sorry I called her ma’am, though.”

Meanwhile I walk towards the brougham with Mrs. Wilson.

“Miss Dixon has called on you then?” she says.



“Yes.”

“How do you like her?”

“Oh, she’s a rough diamond. Is she on a visit with you now, Mrs. Wilson?”

“Yes, until to-morrow. Poor girl, she has no one to bring her anywhere, so I have taken her in hand.”

“That is quite right, and very kind of you,” I say with truth.

“You think so?” she answers dimpling.  
“When are you going back to Brownlow?”

“Oh, soon, though I feel very jolly here.”

“Do you?” and she jumps into the brougham without either waiting for my assistance or allowing her guest to enter first.

Soon the brougham is on its way down the drive.

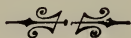
When I enter the hall again I find Miss Minerva walking slowly, and with Fanny’s assistance, upstairs, while the squire, speechless with indignation and rage, stands, hair

on end, gazing after her. As soon as he can command words he cries to me, "Damme, Phil, I've given her a bit of my mind! I'm not going to stand her any longer. Do you hear?" he shouts up the stairs, "I won't stand it any longer, madam; and if I say I won't, I *won't*."

"The old boy will assert himself yet, see if he doesn't," whispers Tom to me.

"The sooner the better," I reply.

"Yes, you're right, Phil. I'd rather live in a bad harmonium than have to put up with Aunt M."



## CHAPTER VII.

### A-HUNTING WE WILL GO.

A STILL, close morning finds us on our way to the meet at Roundwood—Syd and I riding together, while Paul and the squire are a little way ahead of us.

“Where did you get that horse?” Syd says, running his eye over my mount—which arrived from Brownlow with my “togs” this morning.

“Purchased him in London last June,” I answered.

“How do you like him?”

“I’ll tell you that when the day is over. I have never ridden him since I tried him.”

We ride on in silence for a while, and then I say:

"I don't like the look of the sky, Syd, nor the unnatural closeness of the air."

"What does it tell of?" he asks.

"I fancy it is the forerunner of a very severe storm."

"I hope not. Enthusiastic huntsman as I am, I object to being drenched to the skin or of being a target for erratic flashes of lightning."

"I say, Syd, what do you think of Mrs. Wilson?" Why I should ask this question I don't know.

"How do you mean?"

"Why, what do you think of her appearance, style and general *tout ensemble*?"

"I think her a stunner, Phil—a regular ripper." And Syd lights his cigar with a flourish.

Can *he* be smitten as well as little Towers? Why not? She appears to be the sort of woman to smite anybody.

"Why do you ask me that question?" he continues, eyeing me.

“Well, do you know, Syd, I think your father would not object very strongly to the widow becoming his daughter-in-law. Now, honour bright, would you feel disposed to marry her?”

“Why, what the devil are you talking about?” Syd cries. “Would I marry Mrs. Wilson! What put such an idea into your head?” And he laughs.

“Oh, I don’t know,” I say; “I simply asked you from mere idle curiosity.”

Syd puffs very rapidly at his cigar for a few paces, and then says in a low voice:

“It is a curious thing, your speaking of marriage, Phil, for presently I hope to meet the only woman I will ever marry—that is always providing that she will have me.”

“Why, who on earth is she?” I ask.

“Miss Fayncourt.”

“What, the actress?”

“The actress; but don’t speak so loud, the governor might overhear us.”

“And is she down *here*?”

“Yes; the fact is this: When I was last in town, Tom Pierce introduced me to Miss Fayncourt at a *matinée*. I found her a delightfully pleasant, sensible, witty and polished woman, looking even more lovely off the stage than when on it. We got on splendidly together.”

“Well?”

“Well, she told me that she was passionately fond of hunting, and I strongly advised her to run down here.”

“Oh, you did, did you?”

“Yes, you know it is only an hour and a half's run by special from Victoria. I told her our county had the best pack in all England.”

“What a whopper! and what did she say to that?”

“She thought the distance too far. However, her season at the Haymarket being up last week—she starts for the provinces in a

month.—I made Tom write her a note giving a glowing description of our sport, and urging her to come down and have a day with us. To this she wrote to Tom asking him to be good enough to engage rooms for her and a stall for her horse at the hotel in Torpington. This Tom has done.”

“And you think she is sure to put in an appearance?”

“Certain, my boy.” And Syd smiles a smile of triumph.

“I wonder what the governor would say if he knew all this,” I say.

This makes Syd look troubled for a minute, but the next minute he cries:

“I don’t care what he or any one else says or thinks. I’ll marry Miss Fayncourt if she’ll have me.”

And he will. These Woodbourn Bartons are a stubborn, determined lot. But won’t there be a row in the house!

Presently we reach Roundwood, and there

sure enough is Miss Fayncourt, the celebrated actress, dressed in a grey habit and mounted on a magnificent chestnut. She is the observed of all observers amongst this largely-attended meet, though no one seems to know who she is. Syd at once rides towards her. She greets him with a cordial smile, and soon both are in what appears to be a most interesting conversation.

"By Jove! there is Sydney Barton with the fair unknown," I overhear one rider say.

"Who *can* she be?" asks another. "She is not from any of the houses."

Now Paul rides up.

"I say, Phil," he says, "do you see who Syd is talking to?"

"Yes."

"She has created quite a sensation."

"She seems to be creating a sensation as far as the squire is concerned, at present," I say, for at this moment the squire is doing all he can to attract his son's



attention—but the latter will not see him. This seems to put the old boy into his usual state of temper, but he is still too much the old gentleman to interrupt the pair. However, he keeps hovering round them.

“Wonder if he knows who she is?” I say.

“Oh, yes,” answered Paul; “I told him.”

“You *did*?”

“Yes—what harm? He asked me if I knew who the lady in grey was, and I answered, Miss Fayncourt, the famous actress. Did I do wrong?”

“Oh, no,” I reply, but seeing all the time a row looming in the distance.

And now the little widow turns up with Miss Dixon, who drives a phaeton and pair of bay ponies. The pretty Yankee handles the reins, as a driver, capitally. A groom canters behind leading the widow’s black-brown mare.

I dismount and assist her to the saddle.

“Well, how do you like all this arrangement in pink, Miss Dixon?” I ask.

“Oh, it’s real spry,” she answers. “I guess I’ll learn riding right away.”

As she is speaking, our M.F.H., little Towers to wit, advances on a horse a great deal too big for him—or is it that he is too small for the horse? He lifts his hat in a very formal manner to the widow, I imagine. The latter immediately introduces him to Miss Dixon.

“Awh,” remarks Towers, raising his hat again.

“Oh, my! and you are the master of all these beautiful dogs?” cries Miss Dixon.

“Awh, yes,” he says. “Do you hunt?”

“Well, now, it’s mighty curious to be asked that question so often,” she answers.

“No, I don’t hunt.”

“But she is going to learn riding, Mr. Towers,” the widow puts in.

“Awh, delighted to hear it!”

Little Towers never says “Awh” except when talking to a lady—especially a lady he has met for the first time. Part of his madness.

And now he informs us that it is time to make a move for the covert, and bidding *au revoir* to Miss Dixon, away we go.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### I COME A CROPPER.

TOWERS goes ahead while I and the widow proceed at a slow pace.

“By the way, Mrs. Wilson, what is your opinion of little Towers *now*?” I ask.

“Why do you ask?” she answers, smiling.

“Oh, I don’t know, only I fancy he is a great admirer of yours.”

“Well, sir, and pray is there anything very wonderful in that?” she demands.

“No, quite the opposite—only I just wanted to know—that is—I——” Here I come to grief.

“You just wanted to know what?” asks the widow, dimpling considerably.

“Well, don’t you see, Mrs. Wilson, I once

said in *fun* something or other about you and Towers, and you got exceedingly annoyed, and so, don't you see, I wanted to know if the same idea—that is, what I mean to say, you once said——” Here she breaks into a silvery laugh.

“Why, what on earth *are* you talking about?” she cries.

“Upon my word I don't know,” I answer with sublime truthfulness. And then we both break into a canter, and soon get up with all the others, now well on their way to the Roundwood coverts—never known to fail.

By-and-by, Monsieur Reynard is called out and responds to the invitation. Tally ho! ho! ho! And away we mad people go over hedges and ditches. I keep close by the widow in case of accident, though she does not require any pilot as she is a fearless rider and a finished fencer. Away to my right I catch sight of Syd, who is piloting Miss Fayn-

court, while behind both rides the squire, evidently determined to keep his eye on them.

This madness of hunting is very insidious, and steals away any sanity you may happen to possess before you know where you are. The swift flight through the air intoxicates one, and the excitement bred by seeing a whole field of mounted madmen in flashing coats, is certainly very exhilarating. The widow now leads by a few paces. *I pilot her!* I have quite enough to do in looking after myself. My horse has never been over the country before, and is slightly nervous over his jumping. Must be very careful or he will spill me.

And now I am somewhat concerned to find that M. Reynard has taken it into his tawny head to double and make for Woodbourn Heath. If he insists on continuing his course right on to that decidedly trappy locality, some of us will certainly come to grief.

Woodbourn Heath is really not a heath at all, at all, as Pat would say, but a tract of about thirty acres of rough and rugged ridges of gravelly soil covered with rank grass and furze. Its danger to riders consists of its trapping ditches, which are for the most part hidden by the furze growing along their sides, though horses who know the spot generally manage to come out of it all right. Yes, sure enough the fox is going straight for the heath! Now, shall I risk my novice of a horse? No. I call to the widow, but she does not hear me. On she goes towards the treacherous spot. She may come to grief—I *will* follow her. Surely where a woman goes *I* am not afraid to go.

Now we are at the confounded place. Straight ahead goes the widow towards a line of low furze, which I know screens a wide ditch with a sloping bank on its opposite side.

“Steady,” I call, but she does not or will

not hear. This won't do—I'll hasten up and show her the way.

This I do—now for it—oh!

\* \* \* \* \*

When I open my eyes I find myself lying on the grass, with my head resting on something very soft—it is Mrs. Wilson's breast.

“Thank God!” she exclaims. “Oh, I thought you were killed.”

Her face is pale, and she has evidently been very much frightened. Indeed I can still feel her tremble.

“I'm all right,” I answer, after testing each limb; “no bones broken. Only a little shaking. Let me see, how did it happen? Oh, yes, that ditch. But—where are our horses?”

“I don't know, and I don't care,” she answers. “All I know is that you are safe.”

“Safe—of course I am; just assist me to my feet.”



“You’re sure you are all right?” she says without moving.

“Certain—just let me stand on my feet and I’ll prove it.”

She stands up, gives me her hand and I am soon on my feet again. Now I am conscious that my right ankle is a little painful.

“Ah!” I exclaim, “my ankle is touched.”

“Is it?” she asks anxiously, “then take my arm; we have not far to go to gain Woodbourn House.”

“It is very kind of you, Mrs. Wilson,” I say, taking her arm and walking slowly in the direction of the house. “But for you, I might have lain there, and perhaps have been galloped upon by some of the others.”

“Oh, don’t!” she says with a shudder; “the instant I saw your horse go down, I drew up and ran to you—your horse and mine, meanwhile, going off on their own account.”

“And where are they now I wonder?”

“Oh, they are certain to be secured and brought home,” she says.

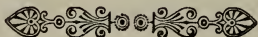
“It is a wonderful fact,” I remark presently, “but woman seems to be always at hand to comfort man when he is down.”

She says nothing for a moment—then she asks :

“Why don’t you marry?”

“Marry!” I exclaim, stopping and looking at her. “Marry! Oh, Mrs. Wilson, will *you* marry me?” and I take both her hands. “Say you will.”

“Yes, dear.”



## CHAPTER IX.

### ANOTHER ACCIDENT.

THE wind has been getting stronger and stronger—it began ere I got my spill—yet do we not move a step from where we are standing.

“Why, I must have loved you all along,” I say, “my dear little—little——”

“Marie,” she says, smiling a delightful smile; “that’s what you are to call me now.”

“Marie, then—I know now that I have been loving you all along.”

“I’m glad to hear it, *Phil*,” she says; “now come along, ere your ankle gets too inflamed. You must have it bathed the instant we reach the house.” So saying, she takes my arm in hers, and we once more proceed on

our way. Stronger and stronger blows the wind.

“We are going to have a storm to-night,” I say; “let us hope it won’t come on ere we reach home.”

“What if it does?” she answers. “We are together, Phil, dear, and together we will meet sun and storm until the end.”

Very pretty, indeed, does the little woman look as she says these words. Under the circumstances, the correct thing to do is to kiss her. I always like to be fairly in the fashion. And so on we go again, I scarcely noticing the pain in my ankle as we chat about the future, while every now and again we have to cling to each other to keep from being blown away.

“I wonder how the hunt is proceeding, or in what part of the county it is now?” I say.

“Oh, I don’t know, and I don’t care,” she answers. And I don’t believe she *does*.

At last we reach the house, and, entering unannounced, find Fanny and Tom with their heads very close together, studying "Romeo and Juliet" by the drawing-room fire.

Both jump up with comical promptness.

"Pray don't let us disturb you," says Marie with a wicked smile.

But Fanny has noticed my limp.

"You have been thrown, Phil!" she exclaims.

"Yes, but with no more serious result than a sprained ankle," I say.

"And you, Mrs. Wilson," asks Tom, "have you come a cropper also?"

"No; Mrs. Wilson came to my assistance when I fell, and then her horse joined mine in a gallop by themselves."

"Now, Fanny, I want Mr. Brownlow to bathe his ankle," Marie says.

"Yes, come along, Phil. Take my arm," exclaims Tom, and so saying he offers his arm, and together we go up to my room.

“By Jove! Phil, the wind is rising,” he says.

“Yes, I expect we shall have a storm to-night.”

Tom gets off my riding boots, and I make shift to get off the rest of my hunting clothes by myself. Then, after getting inside a lounge suit, I set to to bathe my ankle. Tying a silk handkerchief steeped in water round it, I get on a pair of slippers, and am about to proceed downstairs again when, happening to look through the window, I catch sight of the noble army of hunters going full speed along the narrow ridge of land which flanks the bottom of the park. This ridge is divided in the centre by a high “open” paling painted green. Horses in our hunt always take care to clear it with something to spare; but it is a dangerous obstacle for strange horses, who might fancy they could jump *through* it.

I catch sight of Miss Fayncourt’s grey.

habit ; she is still piloted by Syd. On they gallop towards the paling. Syd clears it, while she follows him. Ah ! just as I expected. Her foolish horse has come to grief, having regularly smashed through the fence.

Syd has been on the alert, and hastens to her assistance. Luckily the animal has not rolled, but remains where he fell, and in another moment Syd has assisted the fair rider to her feet. What an escape !

I hasten, as well as I am able, to the drawing-room to tell the news. And while we sit discussing the chances of there being any *more* accidents, Syd enters with Miss Fayncourt on his arm. She looks dreadfully pale, and still bears traces of her shock, though she recognizes Tom with a smile.

Syd loses not a moment in introducing his sister, and then the widow and myself in turn. And then the stranger sinks into a chair by the window, and we all fear she is about to swoon, but Fanny is quick with a glass of

water. At this moment the squire enters by the *further* door.

“Sydney!” he exclaims, white with fury, “what the deuce do you mean by following a confounded actress——”

Here he stops short, and glares in astonishment at Miss Fayncourt, who has sprung to her feet. The next instant she falls back insensible into the arms of Syd, who is just in time to catch her.

“Miss Fayncourt is one of my most esteemed friends!” exclaims Tom with an angry flush; and Syd, whose face is now as white as his fair burden’s, says:

“Woodbourn must be coming to a pretty pass when a lady, and a stranger, is insulted by its master while beneath its roof.” Then he raises the actress in his arms and carries her over to a couch, upon which he gently lays her.

The squire, who still stands silent and astonished, does not reply for a moment.



Then he says: "I did not know the lady was here."

But Syd gives an exclamation of impatience, and the squire, without another word, walks out of the room.

Presently Miss Fayncourt regains consciousness.

"Now, Miss Fayncourt, you really must allow me to assist you to your room," Fanny says.

"*My* room!" she repeats.

"Yes," Fanny continues. "A good night's rest will refresh you and restore your nerves completely."

"Of course it will," Tom cries.

But at first Miss Fayncourt won't hear of it. She says she *must* return to Torpington.

"Torpington!" exclaims Syd. "My dear Miss Fayncourt, listen to the wind. Why, you would be blown away."

And then Fanny and Marie use their joint

persuasion, and eventually she consents and goes upstairs with them.

The instant the trio have left the room Syd cries, "There, what do you think of that? Am I a child or an idiot that I cannot speak to any person, man or woman, whom I choose to speak to?"

"Oh, it's disgraceful!" Tom exclaims in a tone of disgust.

Here Paul enters.

"Oh, you are all right, Phil," he cries. "I saw your horse being led towards Brownlow by one of the hunt servants, and immediately imagined that you had met with some severe accident."

"No, only a slight sprain. Did you happen to see Mrs. Wilson's horse in any one's charge?"

"No," he answers; "but I saw a splendid horse lying dead with a piece of paling through his body up there on the ridge."

“Yes,” Syd says, “*her* horse is dead—regularly spitted himself on one of the rails. She does not know it, I having told her that he was only hurt, and that I would send a groom for him.”

\* \* \* \* \*

As the evening wears on the wind rises to a gale, while the rain comes down in torrents, and it blows with such fury against the windows that they are in imminent danger of being smashed. The candles in the dining-room flicker with the draught, which no amount of bolting, barring and curtaining can keep out, and the noise in the chimney is loud and weird. Boom! whistle! and roar! goes the mad wind round the house outside. Wonder how Miss Minerva likes it? We are anything but a lively group at dinner, though to be sure I and Marie can talk in eye-language. The squire speaks not a word to any one. Syd also is in the sulks, while Tom and Fanny talk in low

tones. What a contrast to the chatter-chatter we usually indulge in!

Immediately after dinner the squire disappears, and then Paul and Syd go to the billiard-room. Tom and Fanny also retire to some remote apartment, after the latter has been to visit her guest's room. I suppose it is because I am very happy and contented that I refrain from moralizing on the present internal "arrangements" of this delightful madhouse. Yet, what a chapter I could write. What a lecture I could deliver on this phase of English home life. Not alone here in Woodbourn, but in dozens and dozens of other houses throughout England to-night, are internal dissensions rife—dissensions which, perchance, will culminate in the break-up of many a happy fireside circle. Now, if you were, Asmodeus-like, to peep through the roof of each of those houses, you would find that all the strife and unhappiness was created by some mem-

ber of the family wanting to marry, or having married the mate of her or his choice. This always has been, is, and always will be, the sole cause of discord in English county families. Mad! mad! mad! God bless my soul! *how* mad we all are!

And just think of the morbid madness of this woman Minerva Barton; day after day, year after year, she keeps within her room, seldom coming among any of her kith and kin, and *never* going out in the pure air of Heaven. It is this close confinement which makes her so nervous—*ill* she really is not, though she fancies she is dying. A good electric shock would, I am convinced, do her any amount of good.

And then turn your attention to the squire: think of an old man like him bothering his head, nay, working himself into a fury over his son's politeness to a beautiful woman. What will it matter to him in a few, a very few, short years, *who* his son

marries? The old mad creature! And Syd?—awfully mad. And as for Fanny and her cousin Tom, they are appalling cases.

“What *are* you thinking about?” says the widow pouting a little.

“Thinking how mad we all are.”

“Well, upon my word!” she exclaims laughing, “you certainly go in for pleasing subjects.”

“By the way, talking of madmen, what about little Towers?” I ask.

“What about him?”

“Is he not a great admirer of yours?”

“Well, surely I cannot help that,” and she laughs. But the next moment she becomes serious and says “I’ll tell you the truth, Phil; he asked me to marry him last week.”

“What!” I exclaim, “the impertinent little puppy! What did you say?”

“Of course, I told him I was very sorry, and all that, you know.”

ANOTHER ACCIDENT.

“The little puppy!” I exclaim again.

“Ah, well, you know, he couldn’t help it,” she says dimpling.

“No,” I say after a pause, “who could?”

“Now, come along and listen to my playing that new waltz.”



## CHAPTER X.

### MISS FAYNCOURT LEAVES WITH AN ESCORT.

A BLEAK, cold morning, and a storm fitfully moaning its death wail. From my window I can count four noble trees lying low in the park. I think of *my* ancestral oaks and elms in Brownlow Park, and pray that none of them have come to grief.

My ankle is still a little painful, as I descend to the breakfast-room, there to find Marie, who has been down first of us all.

“How is Miss Fayncourt this morning?” I ask after certain ceremonies had been gone through.

“Oh, I expect she is quite recovered,” she answers; “but Fanny will tell us when she comes down. I’m so sorry Mr. Barton spoke so strongly. She seems to be awfully nice.”



“Yes ; but the prejudice against players dies hard in country houses ; and besides, Miss Minerva has completely poisoned the squire’s mind on the subject of theatres.”

And then, so selfish are mortals who are afflicted with the “tender passion,” that we quite forget all about Miss Fayncourt—and everybody else—in our own happy chatter on the future.

Now Fanny enters, and in answer to our inquiries says : “Miss Fayncourt is completely recovered, but declines to come down to breakfast. I wanted to send one of the grooms early this morning, to the hotel in Torpington, to bring back her maid, but she would not allow me to do so. Papa spoke with such outrageous rudeness, that I am not surprised at her wishing to be under as little compliment to us all as possible.”

“Well, and how is she going to leave ?”  
I say ; “her horse is killed.”

“Yes, isn’t it sad ?” Fanny goes on ;

“she doesn’t know of it yet, and has asked me if I would have it brought round ready for her after breakfast.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Well, the best thing is to say nothing until she has breakfasted, and then tell her. Syd will have one of *his* hunters ready.”

One by one the others arrive; the squire still “offish,” as Tom puts it, and Syd in *riding attire*.

“I trust Miss—a—Fayncourt is quite recovered from her accident this morning,” the squire says in a cold voice to his daughter.

“Yes, papa; but she breakfasts in her room.”

“Very unhealthy, very, and a very lazy habit,” says the squire looking under his brow towards Sydney.

The latter has flushed a little, but has the sense to say nothing. Not so, Tom.

“I don’t see anything particularly lazy——”

He has got so far when a warning glance from Fanny stops him, and silence almost reigns supreme until breakfast is just over, when the squire, looking at Syd, asks:

“What do you appear at the breakfast-table in *that* get-up for, sir? You are not hunting to-day.”

“No, I am not going to hunt, but I am going to accompany Miss Fayncourt back to her hotel, from this delightful home of hospitality,” Syd says coolly, rising and going towards the door.

“Why, what the deuce do you dare to ——” but ere the squire can finish Syd is gone. Then, glancing round on us all, he continues, “What, what is this? Confound it, will some one explain?”

“Explain *what?*” asks Tom.

“Explain what, sir?” cries the squire. “Explain the meaning of Sydney accompanying this person to her hotel.”

“If you mean by the term *person* the

lady whom you have the honour of receiving beneath your roof, all I can say——”

But Tom cannot finish ere the squire breaks in with :

“Honour of receiving beneath my roof? What the devil do you mean, sir? Eh? I say, sir, what do you dare to say, sir? I want to——”

But Tom has followed Syd's example, and has retired. Not wishing to get into any discussion with the infuriated old pepper-box, *I*, too, leave the room, and am almost immediately followed by the widow.

Presently Fanny comes to tell us that news has been brought to the squire of the collapse of a large wooden sheep-shelter during last night's storm, and the death of nine of his famous breed of sheep, which have been buried in the ruins.

“Papa has gone post-haste to the spot,” she adds. “What a chapter of accidents!”

And shortly afterwards, while the widow

and I are studying the language of flowers in the conservatory, Tom enters.

“By Jove!” he exclaims, “we may look out for squalls.”

“Why?” we ask.

“Why? Simply for two reasons—Syd insists on riding with Miss Fayncourt to Torington, and the squire has had nine of his sheep killed last night. Put that and that together, and it brings out the *sum row*.”

“I expect you are right,” Marie says.

Presently the widow’s — I *must* stop calling her the widow now—presently Marie’s maid arrives with a mysterious-looking box, and in another half-hour Marie comes down the stairs minus her riding-habit and plus a dark crimson walking costume, with a natty little hat to match.

“Now I’m going,” she says to me; “and, Phil dear, promise me you’ll go back to Brownlow to-morrow so that I can call

and see you, and satisfy myself that you are attending to your sprain."

"Yes," I say, "I'll return to-morrow. By the way, what about your horse?"

"Oh, she was caught all right, and brought home by somebody's servant. Now come and see me to the door."

I take her arm and walk with her to the door. There stands her brougham, with Jane, her maid, waiting. I also notice a groom with two horses—one with a lady's saddle. At this moment, Sydney, who has been awaiting her coming in the lobby, walks tall and erect down the stairs with Miss Fayncourt on his arm. How stately and handsome she looks in her grey habit and silk hat. She bows with well-bred grace to us all as we stand at the door. Then advancing to Fanny she takes her hand and kisses her.

"I shall never forget your kindness, Miss Barton," she says; "never." Then turning to Marie she shakes hands with her.

“Good-bye, Mrs. Wilson; I suppose I shall meet you in London next season; at least, I hope so.”

“So do I, Miss Fayncourt,” says Marie, looking at me.

“Good-bye, Tom,” she exclaims, turning to the coming Shakespeare. “I *know* I shall see you soon.”

“Yes, you may put that down as settled,” Tom answers.

And then she takes Syd’s arm and goes down the steps. Marie says her *adieux* and enters her brougham with her maid. In another moment all have departed. As we turn from the door, there stands Miss Minerva on the stairs. The storm seems to have shaken her up a bit, and she looks positively green.

“Hillo, aunt! how are you this morning?” cries Tom. But she heeds not his impertinence.

“Who was that strange lady who slept

here last night, and who has just departed on horseback with Sydney?" she asks in grating tones, looking at Fanny.

"The celebrated actress, Miss Fayncourt," replies Tom promptly.

"What!" she exclaims.

"Fact, I assure you," says her dutiful nephew.

"Did you say actress?—in Woodbourn?" she cries with anger. "Fanny, is that true?"

"Yes, quite true, aunt," and Fanny walks away. We all follow suit, leaving the old lady speechless on the stairs.

By common instinct Paul, Tom and myself make for the Snuggery, well knowing that the smell of tobacco smoke always prevalent there will keep the old she-dragon from following us.

"Now, won't she give the squire a bit of her mind," says Tom. "Poor Syd is bound to get it hot and heavy before long."

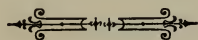


We can hear Aunt Minerva calling for Fanny.

"I hope Fanny won't go to her," Tom cries. "She only wants to have a row with somebody. Why can't she kick up a row with one of the servants? Upon my soul, Phil, it makes me mad when I see how that girl is worried by this confounded old aunt of ours."

"Makes you mad?" I exclaim. "Why, it wants no making—you are mad."

"I suppose I am," he admits after a pause.



## CHAPTER XI.

### STORM NUMBER TWO.

It is not long ere Tom ventures out of the smoking sanctuary in search of Fanny. I wonder how the squire will like his precious nephew as a son-in-law? for son-in-law to the squire Tom has evidently made up his mind to become, and such being the case, all the squires and Miss Minervas ever invented will not keep Tom Pierce, gentleman, and Fanny Elizabeth Barton, spinster, from being made one.

All this time Paul sits puffing a disreputable-looking briar pipe, one side of which is burnt down nearly half-way.

“I say, Phil,” he says, “I think it is about time I was back again at my lecturing.”

“Nonsense,” I exclaim. “I am returning

to Brownlow to-morrow, and you are coming with me. I will not hear of your leaving until my marriage."

"Your what?" he cries, letting the briar fall out of his mouth.

"My marriage ; I am going to marry Mrs. Wilson."

"The devil you are !" he cries rising and grasping my hand. "I'm awfully glad to hear it, old fellow ; she's a charming little body, and just the wife for you. When is it coming off?"

"Oh, in about a month ; I want you to be best man if you don't mind."

"Mind, certainly not, my dear boy ; I'll be quite pleased," and he resumes his seat.

"I expect mine will not be the only marriage in these parts this year," I say.

"No?"

"No ; I expect Tom will insist on marrying Fanny, or Fanny will insist on marrying Tom."

"Yes," he says, "they seem to be getting on all right."

"And then I fully expect that Syd will insist on marrying Miss Fayncourt, in spite of the squire and Miss Minerva. The very idea of the opposition is quite enough to make him determined on marrying."

"Yes," Paul says ; and then after a pause, "All my friends seem to be getting married. Happy beggars !" And he turns to look out of the window at nothing in particular.

"I do wish you would rouse yourself from your dreaming and look out for a wife," I say. "Come now, can't you think of *some* woman you have met *of late* who would suit ?"

"No, no, Phil, it's no use ; the die is cast."

"Well, then, come along and have a game of billiards."

\* \* \* \* \*

Slowly the day drags its length along. The squire returns growling from viewing his

dead sheep, and is immediately summoned to Miss Minerva's presence.

"She's going to make it hot for poor Syd," Tom says. "Wait until you see what a jolly row we will have by-and-by."

He is right. About six o'clock I am resting my ankle by lying on a couch in the drawing-room. The candles are not lighted, but the fire burns brightly, though the room is so large that it is quite gloomy, not to say dark, in the corner wherein I am resting. This fact I shortly find cause to regret, for presently Syd enters followed by the squire, who closes the door with a bang.

"Now, sir!" he cries, and I know there is going to be a row. They do not notice me, and it is too late to think of moving; the whole thing is very awkward.

"Now, sir!" the squire repeats. "What right had you in bringing that woman here yesterday evening?"

"What right had I?" Syd answers coolly.

“The right of courtesy to a lady—a lady who had met with an accident.”

“Pish!” exclaims the squire. “She was quite well enough to go home to her hotel, quite well enough, sir.”

“I say she was not,” Syd answers sharply.

“How dare you contradict me, sir! I say she was. And how dare you leave here with her this morning, eh? What the devil did you mean by that, Sydney Barton, eh? Tell me that, sir? How dare you sir, eh? I say how dare you, sir?” and the squire has to stop for breath.

“How dare I?” echoes Syd scornfully; “how dare I? Am I a child?”

“Yes, you are, sir!” cries the squire. “What do you mean by riding off with a confounded actress, eh?”

“Father, you must not speak of Miss Fayncourt in that fashion. I’ll *not* allow it!” cries Syd in a dangerous tone.

“You’ll not have it,” screams the squire

“You! Who the devil are you, sir? Tell me that, eh? I say how dare you——”

“Oh! for Heaven’s sake, stop this ridiculous nonsense,” exclaims Syd moving towards the door. This simply puts the squire almost beside himself with fury.

“Ridiculous nonsense!” he shouts. “Is that what you say, you damned fool!”

“Father, *don’t* say that again,” exclaims Syd turning back, his face looking blanched in the firelight.

“Yes, I will,” cries the squire. “You *are* a damned fool!”

Syd turns without another word and quits the room. The squire sits by the fire for a moment to compose himself, I suppose, and then muttering something or other about fools in general, goes out, and leaves me alone.

Dear, dear, in the words of Shakespeare, “What fools these mortals be.”

Presently I limp out into the hall, where I meet Tom.

"Did you hear the row?" he asks.

"Yes," I say. "Where was Fanny?"

"In her room, thank Heaven."

"Where is Syd?"

"In his room."

\* \* \* \* \*

Syd does not appear at dinner, which is gone through in depressing silence. Indeed, the squire does not open his lips, except to eat, during the whole time. *What* a contrast to other times! But I find that pleasant periods in our existence are few and short, and only come and go that we may have something to regret. Marie seems to have carried a good deal of my gaiety away with her. Thank goodness, I go back to Brownlow to-morrow. I wish Syd would turn up; I hope he is not fool enough to go without any dinner.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dinner well over I venture up to Syd's room door and knock at it.



No answer.

I knock again, louder.

Still no answer.

Oh, hang it all, he must be sound asleep! I open the door and look in. A candle burns on a side table, the room is in a state of confusion, but Syd is *non est*! But the open drawers and torn letters tell me a tale. Syd has packed a portmanteau and *has gone*!

What a madman! Now to tell Fanny.

I limp downstairs, only to meet the poor girl sobbing, while Tom tries to comfort her.

"You know all, Phil?" he says.

"I only know that Syd is not in his room."

"He's gone away," says Fanny through her sobs. "Ben Bantim saw him drive off in the dog-cart with his portmanteau, while we were at dinner."

"Who attended him?"

"The under-groom."

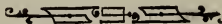
"Well, when he drives back, he will no doubt bring a message from Syd," I say.

“No, no,” Fanny says; “he will send no message. You don’t know him, Phil.”

“I tell you the best thing to do,” I say. “Tom, you go up to London as quick as you can and hunt him up. He is sure to have gone there.”

“Capital idea!” cries Tom. “I’ll go by first train to-morrow morning. Don’t fret, Fanny; I know all Syd’s haunts, and will be sure to find him.”

And Fanny, comforted, dries her tears. I look into the dining-room: there sits the squire, with brows knit and determined lips pressed tight. The old English volcano!



## CHAPTER XII.

### CONCERNING SYDNEY.

HOME once more. It is exactly a week since Paul and I quitted Woodbourn. Complete rest has made my ankle all right again. (The widow has called every day to make kind inquiries about it, bless her! We are to be married in four weeks from to-day.)

Poor old Paul is now in the library busy at work upon an article entitled "Intellectual Monarchy," for one of the monthly reviews. I suggested the idea, for the mere reason of giving him something to occupy his mind, and keep *her* out of it.

Sydney Barton has neither been seen nor heard of since the night he drove away

from Woodbourn. All known of him by Fanny—the squire never mentions him—is that he took a ticket for London. I had a sort of vague idea that he would have driven to Miss Fayncourt's hotel and then and there have asked her to marry him on the spot. But not so; he never even called there on his way to the station. Probably the actress had left for London by the five o'clock train, so that if he had thought of calling at the hotel he would have drawn it blank. Now after all this hubbub and row, all this alarum and excursion, I wonder if Miss Fayncourt would think of marrying Syd? Would she care to give up her great position on the stage, with all its triumphs and glitter, for the humdrum life in a country house? I fear me not—and yet——

But what is Syd doing all this time? How does he manage to exist?

Enter Jenkins with midday letters. Ah, here is one from Tom Pierce. Now we may

hear something of the runaway heir to Woodbourn.

“Cohills Mansions,

“Notting Hill, London, W.

“January 17th.

“MY DEAR PHIL,

“According to promise I write you *re* my cousin Syd. I may say at the commencement I have not been able to light upon the slightest trace of him.

“I cannot make it out at all; I thought I knew, in fact I *do* know, all his haunts in town, but he has neither been seen nor heard of in any of them. Even at the Olympic, which you know is his favourite club, they know nothing about him. I have even called upon the innocent cause of all the row, Miss Fayncourt, and told her the whole story—I thought it best—but she had neither seen nor heard from him. She was greatly shocked, but I told her it was all

Aunt Minerva's fault. And so it is, Phil. Poor Fanny writes to me in a state of fearful anxiety. I really think Syd *ought* to write to her, don't you?

"I don't know how he is off for funds, but he cannot have had very much when he started. How is he going to exist when his cash is all gone? That's what I want to know. However I don't mean to give up the hunt yet, and probably my next letter will inform you of the important 'Capture of Sydney Barton, the Escaped Lunatic.'

"Yours as ever,

"TOM PIERCE."

Lunatic is not the word, my dear Tom—madman is the correct term to apply to Syd.

\* \* \* \* \*

In looking over a batch of cards left by callers during my absence, I come upon

two which are complete strangers. Here they are:

MR. HENRY ARTHUR WYNNE,  
FAIRLEIGH COTTAGE.

MRS. VINER,  
FAIRLEIGH COTTAGE.

They are newcomers, and evidently a bachelor brother and a widow sister. Fairleigh Cottage is a charming little house, standing in about fifty acres of a park, and is part of the Stanton property. Talking of Stanton, how the deuce is it the duchess has never written to anybody? I wonder how the Tatte-Snarlows manage to exist, now that they cannot visit the Castle?

Presently Paul enters, looking weary. "I'm regularly tired out, Phil," he cries, sinking into a chair. "Writing for maga-

zines must be a killing task to those regularly in harness at the work."

"How goes your article?"

"I've got about half through it, but I don't think I'll finish it."

"Why?"

"Ah, it's too much trouble."

"Paul, Paul, *you'll* never be the founder of a school of thought or of a system," I say.

"Then you think I have no determination?" he asks.

"I am afraid you have not. Now why give up your article when it is half finished? How have you treated the subject?"

"Oh, just as I have treated it in my lectures. I have got as far as the accursed manner in which Charles the Second treated all those who had fought and bled for him." Here Paul rouses up, and the old fire returns to his eyes. "Think of it, Phil—think of that miserable debauchee and betrayer of his country being king over this mighty Eng-



land! Think of the tears of joy—*tears of joy*, Phil, shed by the populace on his entrance into London. Think of him taking it all as a matter of course, and thinking to himself that really ‘the English people were decidedly very fond of kings,’ and consequently to be treated as children. Can you account for it, Phil? Can you account for the hopeless idiotcy of the English people after all they suffered under Charles the First?”

“I account for it as I account for everything,” I answer. “This is a mad world.”

“And after all Charles the Second’s scandalous reign, they actually allow James the Second to disgrace the name of king in a far more scandalous, blasphemous and cruel manner. Good Heaven! Phil, can you tell me how it is, that with the many men of highest wisdom and intellect living in those times, some one of them was not made ruler and those accursed Stuarts kicked out of England?”

“No, Paul, I cannot tell you. It is the divinity that doth——”

“No, *did* hedge a king,” Paul says smiling. “The Lord’s anointed, forsooth! A precious man Charles the Second to anoint.” He jumps up from his chair and begins the tiger-walk, as I call it. “I can see them now, those great, mighty, proud and brave English people kneeling in the dust as the Lord’s anointed rides by with his French prostitutes, and I can hear them offering a prayer to the pure heavens—a thanksgiving—that Royal Charles condescended to come over from France to rule over them. My God! My God!” And he actually laughs—but it is a bitter laugh. A laugh which would have made the merry monarch feel very uncomfortable indeed.

What a strange, strange man this Paul Joyce is! See, now he resumes his seat and immediately becomes deep in thought. All the fire leaves his eyes, the look of animation

fades from his face—he is thinking of *her*. He sits thus for fully five minutes, and then says, “It’s no use, Phil; *her* face comes between me and all my work.”

“Oh, ridiculous nonsense!” I answer. “You really must not be such a child, Paul.”

“You think me a child, Phil,” he says with a sad smile; “I wish to God I was.”

“Well, I think it childish to be eternally brooding over the past,” I say. “What can’t be cured must be endured, and it’s wrong, and I may add sinful, to spoil the life God has given you by nursing any sentimental sorrow.”

“Yes, it’s all very well to talk like that—I could do the same once: he jests at scars who never felt a wound. You are going to marry the woman of your choice. You know not what sorrow means, and I hope you never will.”

He rises and goes towards the door.

“Where are you off to?” I ask.

“To have a smoke.”

“Well, you might ask a fellow to accompany you,” and I rise and go with him to the “Smokery.” How I wish *that* girl—he has never told me her name—would turn up here! Oh! what a delightful sight that would be. I can fancy the meeting, the blushing; then the talking in low shy voices; then the going for a little walk round the garden, and returning as happy as any king and queen in any story. Alas! this sort of thing is only to be met with in novels.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### MR. BUTTS SHOWS UP.

THE sun is actually shining brightly this morning. Such being the case I am preparing to go out for a canter—Paul is deep in the article on Intellectual Monarchy once more—when Mr. Butts and Miss Dixon are announced.

“I just thought I’d fetch uncle right around to see you,” says Miss Dixon (of New York State). “I guess you have quite forgot to call on *him*.”

“How do you do?” I say, advancing to greet Mr. Butts, who stands still near the door, dressed in a long shiny frock coat, Gladstonian collar and black cravat.

“Pretty fair, pretty fair,” Mr. Butts says, now venturing forward.

"Sit down right here, uncle," his niece says, pointing to a chair beside her. He slides into the chair and gives a bland cough.

"And how have you been, Miss Dixon?" I ask.

"Oh! I've been just real gay and festive. I've had a regular Englified Christmas at Beechley Wold—plum pudding and mince pies, and roast turkey and roast beef, and all that—hadn't I, uncle?"

"Yes, Carrie, we 'ad," replies the uncle, looking at me to see how I would take the astounding intelligence.

"And we had a mistletoe—a real regular mistletoe," exclaims Miss Dixon with a roguish smile. "Hadn't we, uncle?"

"Yes, Carrie, we 'ad," affirms Mr. Butts, who has blown his nose six times already, each time making a sound like a toy trumpet.

"Were there any gentlemen present when the mistletoe hung high?" I ask smiling.

“No,” she says demurely. “No one, only uncle.”

The ghost of a smile flickers over the latter's hatchet features, and then he blows his nose for the seventh time.

“My!” she exclaims presently, “what lovely fiddle-faddles you *have* got. I guess they're worth a pile.”

“Why, what on earth do you call fiddle-faddles?” I inquire laughing.

“Why, those china nick-nacks on the shelves round about,” she answers. “You English call them *bric-à-brac*.” And up she jumps and proceeds to inspect each specimen of my collection of Dresden and Nankin blue.

Mr. Butts follows her with his eyes and I take the opportunity of having a good look at his face. He is not the meek man a casual observer would take him to be. Beneath all that nervous coughing and nose-blowing there lurks an iron will and an intensely stubborn determined nature.

Presently Miss Dixon opens the conservatory door and enters to have a look at the palms.

“Charming woman, your niece,” I say to Mr. Butts. “Let us hope she will take it into her head to marry and settle among us, like your niece the duchess.”

The man’s face loses its look of nervousness and meekness as he exclaims, “Carrie is as superior to the duchess as cheese is to chalk, sir.”

But Carrie has overheard him, and from the door of the conservatory says, “My! uncle, you should go full steam with that! Why my cousin the duchess is a grand lady in comparison to me.”

“I don’t care a halfpenny piece what she is, or what she’s not, she ain’t as good as you, so there I tell you,” exclaims Mr. Butts, who now begins to feel at ease in my august presence, and consequently speaks his mind.

“But my! uncle, Mr. Brownlow doesn’t



want to hear all about my first-class qualities, I reckon. Now you just talk of something else." And Miss Dixon (of New York State) goes back among the palms.

"As lively as a kitten," says Mr. Butts; "just my style, sir. Would make any 'ome 'appy."

"Yes," I say, "I've no doubt of that."

"The man that gits that girl will have all my cash," says Mr. Butts, "every penny of it, an' I don't mind telling you, sir, it runs into very nearly six figures," and he beams proudly upon me.

"Oh! I'm sure she will make a good match," I say; "she is the sort of girl who would attract a man."

"Mind you, sir, he must be a gentleman. I don't care how poor he is as long as he has got his name up in the family line."

"Name up in the family line?" I echo in bewilderment. "Pardon me, Mr. Butts, but I do not quite gather your meaning."

“Why, sir, what I mean is this here—I want my niece to marry a regular gentleman. I ain’t a gentleman, Mr. Brownlow, but my niece is a lady in manner and schoolin’.”

“Certainly.”

“Very well then ; I want her husband to be a man of family pedigree. Now do you understand ? ”

“Oh, yes, perfectly,” I answer.

“And I don’t care a brass farthing if he hasn’t a halfpenny, as long as he has a crest and motter. If she marries a lord, dook or earl, of course well an’ good, but failin’ that, she must marry a gentleman, or her husband won’t have my money, so I tell you.”

“Yes, she deserves a good husband, Mr. Butts, for she is a singularly pleasant and charming girl,” I observe, not knowing really what to say.

“She is that,” exclaims Mr. Butts ; “you’ve hit it in once.”

Just while I’m wondering how I will change

the conversation, Paul fortunately strolls in. At the same moment Miss Dixon comes from the conservatory.

"Why, how do *you* do, Mr. Joyce?" she cries. "See I remember your name! *You* forget mine, I guess?"

"Oh, no, I don't," Paul answers, "I don't forget ladies' names so easily, Miss Dixon."

"La, you *do* actually remember it?" she cries.

"Of course I do."

And then I introduce him to Mr. Butts, who once more begins his coughing and nose-blowing, which does not cease until he has become quite used to Paul's presence. This takes about ten minutes to accomplish.

And then we converse on things in general and nothing in particular until Miss Dixon (of New York State) tells her uncle it is "time to skiddaddle."

"How do you like them?" I ask Paul when they have gone.

"The girl is pretty and piquant," he answers; "what a pity she is so thoroughly Yankee."

"And Mr. Butts?"

"I cannot call him the acme of refinement and culture." And Paul goes back to his writing.

By-and-by I get at him again.

"Now, Paul, why would you not think about laying siege to Miss Dixon's heart? She would make you a capital little wife, despite her Yankee words and ways."

"No," he says, shaking his head and smiling sadly. "It is useless. Marion is my first, last and only love."

"Marion! Oh! is that her name?"

"Yes, didn't I tell you before? Marion Wynne."

"And her brother's name was——"

"Henry Arthur," he answers, looking sharply at me; "do you know him?"

"No," I answer carelessly. "By the way,

Paul, you never told me whether you acted on my advice as given in my letter, eight years ago."

"You mean the letter you sent in answer to mine describing the whole case?"

"Yes."

"Oh! it was the old story over again, Phil—the old story. I wrote her a letter stating I was going to call upon her on a certain day. She replied to it, saying how glad she was to hear of my coming. Well, I went, Phil, went with the full determination of pressing my suit. But when we met, I instantly assumed the old manner of cool indifference. Good Heaven! Phil, what an idiot I must be!" And he starts to his feet. "What *is* the madness which compelled me to act like that?"

Not being good at conundrums I remain silent.

Presently he says, "Well now, if you please, we will talk of something else." And we do.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### I VISIT MY LADY LOVE.

YESTERDAY evening after our conversation anent Marion Wynne, I went to the drawing-room and quietly fished out the two Fairleigh Cottage cards and placed them in my pocket.

“Just as well not to leave them in Paul’s way,” I thought. “By Jove! what a curious incident, their coming to reside hereabouts!”

Little does Paul know of the surprise I have in store for him. This afternoon I intend asking Marie to call upon the new arrivals and invite them over to luncheon on a certain day. I will bring Paul along to the widow’s on that day also, and then—tableau!

“I’m going over to Mrs. Wilson’s, Paul,” I say. “What will you do—will you come with me?”

“No, indeed I won’t,” he replies, “you know I would only be in the way. While you are gone, I will try and finish my article on Intellectual Monarchy. So go your way.”

“Very well, then, I’ll leave you to yourself. I shall be back about four o’clock.”

Off I start on my galloping steed to visit the lady of my love, quite like a knight of old. Presently I come to a bridge spanning the river which divides the Virgemont property from Brownlow. A little way down on the right bank I see a group of men standing round some object.

“I hope none of my sheep have been drowned,” I mutter, as I rein in, and beckon to one of the men, who immediately comes towards me. He is one of my tenants.

“I hope that’s not one of my sheep drowned, Bobbin?” I say.

“No, sir, it beyent no sheep that’s drown’,” he answers; “it be old Hemming the gardener.”

“Hemming!”

“Yes, sir, an’ he must ha’ been in the water a long time. We didn’t right know ’im a-first. Th’ say ’e ’as been missin’ since the big storm.”

Poor old Hemming! And so you have gone to your long account in blissful ignorance of your daughter’s infamy. And she—when will she hear the news?

I ride on towards Virgemont, leaving the group of men and the cold wet body behind me, and feel relieved when I get a good distance away from both.

The widow—Marie, I *should* say—receives me with a little flush of pleasure. The delightful little lady must have had some idea of my visit, for she has a plentiful display of crimson camellias in the drawing-room and wears one in her breast.

“By the way, have you had any visitors from Fairleigh Cottage?” I say presently.

“Yes,” she answers; “only yesterday,



and charming people they are. Have they called at Brownlow?"

"Yes, during my stay at Woodbourn. Who are they, and where have they come from—do you know?"

"Oh, yes; they are Anglo-Indians, and brother and sister. She is a widow—like me, ahem!—her husband, who seems to have been an old man, having died some three years ago. He was a wealthy indigo planter, and must, of course, have left his wife the bulk of his fortune."

"And the brother?"

"Oh, he has been dabbling in coffee planting, but having grown tired of India, sold his shares and came home. He has a small property in Berkshire, but having let the manor house with it, has come to reside in Fairleigh Cottage. And now you know all."

"Yes, and now you must know all," I say.

"All what?" she asks in a tone of surprise.

"Listen."

She does. And I tell her of my accidental discovery that Paul's first, last, and only love is none other than Mrs. Viner, of Fairleigh Cottage.

"No!" exclaims the widow.

"Yes—now I want you to invite the lady over to luncheon to-morrow or next day, and at the same time send an invitation to Paul and myself. Do you understand."

Of course she does; the little widow—Marie I mean—would understand anything (so long as it suited her purpose).

"Capital, *capital!*" she exclaims, dimpling with pleasure. "Won't it be splendid if they both marry after all."

"That's just what I am looking forward to with hope," I say. "And now come and play me something before I go."

She sits at the piano and plays to me

for ten or fifteen minutes, and then I very reluctantly rise to go.

“I’ll ask Mrs. Viner for Wednesday,” she says as we stand at the door while my horse is being brought round; “and you will receive a note on the morning of that day.”

“Very good; and now, in the words of the poet, ‘My charger is jangling his bridle and rein.’”

“Then be off.”

And back again I ride towards Brownlow. When passing the bridge I look for the group of men on the bank, but they have gone and taken the old man’s body with them. Poor old chap! I expect he was regularly blown into the river during the storm. I hope Towers will give him decent burial, for Susan’s sake.

By the way, I wonder what he has done with the girl?

When I reach Brownlow I find Paul

walking up and down the front of the house smoking.

“Article finished, Paul?”

“Not quite—I grew tired and turned it up for to-day,” he answers. “Mrs. Wilson quite well?”

“Yes.”

By and-by, when seated over the fire in the dining-room, he takes from his pocket a roll of paper and unfolding it, says, “I wrote these to-day, but I didn’t finish them. Tell me what you think of them:

“‘It seems a hundred years or so  
Since you and I last parted,  
When cruelly you bid me go,  
Forlorn and broken-hearted.

“‘I think I promised to forget  
That I had ever met you;  
I tried to keep that promise, yet  
I never could forget you.

“‘I know I vow’d I’d cease to think  
I ever cared about you.  
Alas! my thoughts were black as ink,  
And blacker still without you.

“ ‘ And since you’ve scratched me off your list  
Of lovers, and dismissed me,  
How many fellows have you kissed ?  
How many women kissed me ?

“ ‘ How many whispered talks were talked—  
How many vows were spoken ?  
How many moonlit walks were walked—  
How many vows were broken ? ’

“ It wants another verse yet. How do you like it ? ”

“ I think it is capital,” I reply. “ What are you going to do with it ? ”

“ Nothing,” he says, folding the paper and putting it in his pocket. “ I only wrote it for fun.”

“ Now don’t talk nonsense,” I exclaim. “ You know you were thinking of *her*.”

“ Well, suppose I was,” he says ; “ what of that ? She is not here to give it to.”

“ No, of course not ; but if ever you should happen to send them to her, you might as well omit the fourth verse.”

“ If ever I should happen to send them

to her!" he exclaims. "Don't you know very well, Phil, that I never shall have the chance?"

"How should I know?" I ask.

"How should you? Why, my dear fellow, I have as little knowledge of where she is, or whether she is married or single, as *you* have."

And then I tell him of old Hemming's death—just to change the conversation.



## CHAPTER XV.

### PAUL MEETS HIS FATE ONCE MORE.

WEDNESDAY has arrived, and with it has come Marie's note inviting Paul and myself to lunch at Virgemont. In fact, we are on our way thither at the present moment, per horse.

"I say, Paul."

"Yes?"

"What would you do if you were brought suddenly face to face with that lady you are so fond of?"

"What would I do?" he echoes. "Why, what a curious question."

"It is; but you know I am always given to asking these curious riddles. Now, what *would* you do, if you suddenly met her, a widow for instance—I suppose she is married."

“Maid or widow, I really believe I should be struck dumb with emotion!” he answers.

“You really think so?”

“I do indeed.”

Strange that this man, loving a woman with all the depth of his very reserved nature, should, when in that woman’s presence, assume an air of boredom, and actually appear as if tired of her presence! I have heard of women whose foolishly vain natures have made them act thus in the presence of the man they loved, but Paul is the first man I have seen play the game. Ah! ladies and gentlemen, it is a fatal game to play, and breaks not your pockets, but your hearts.

A little way along the road we meet the footman’s understudy, Ben Bantim, dressed in his best, and carrying a large carpet bag.

“Where are you going to?” I ask as we rein up.

“To Torpington, sir, to catch the train for



London. I've 'ad a bit of a shindy with the boss."

"Oh, indeed! What about?"

"Not much, sir, when you come to think of it. To tell you straight, sir, I wanted to turn up the bloomin' job long ago, when Mr. Sydney went away."

"But what was this difference you had with Mr. Barton?"

"Well, you see, sir, that yer Miss Minerva, I couldn't cotton to her nohow, an' this mornin' she struck Dash the setter pup with her stick, and out he comes yelpin' to me. This giv' me the needle, sir, an' I talks what I think out loud enough in the kitchen. The boss heard of it, and got nasty at once, you may reckon, and comes out to the kennels, and slangs me awful. 'Oh, well, here, Mr. Barton,' says I, 'I turn up the job here on the spot.' 'Right you are,' says he; 'here's your money an' go.'"

"And so you left," I say.

“ Yes, sir, I packed my few belongings and started. Miss Fanny, good luck to her, she come to me, an’ she says, ‘I’m very sorry you’re leaving us, Bantim.’ ‘So am I, miss,’ says I, ‘but it can’t be helped now.’ She wanted me to drive into the station in the dog-cart, but I says, ‘No.’ An’ then she says, ‘If you should happen to catch sight of Mr. Sydney, don’t forget to go up an’ make yourself known to ’im.’ ‘Right, miss,’ says I, ‘an’ I’m just the man that would happen to drop across him.’ And then she says, ‘An’ be sure an’ write to me if you see ’im, tellin’ me where he lives an’ how ’e is a-lookin’.’”

“Yes,” I say, “don’t forget to do that.”

“No fear, sir,” answered Bantim. “An’ I’ll bet any one ’alf-a-dollar I spot Mr. Sydney before I’m a month in London.”

After bestowing a coin on Mr. Benjamin Bantim, we start on our way again, and are soon riding up the drive at Virgemont.

In another five minutes we stand in the hall.

“Mr. Brownlow and Mr. Joyce,” announces the footman.

Paul enters about a step before me, and then stops short, but only for one instant. The next moment he is shaking hands in a very matter-of-fact, glad-to-meet-you sort of way, with an extremely handsome woman dressed in a riding habit. This is Mrs. Viner.

Then I am introduced to her, and we all sit down to luncheon. Mrs. Viner has large grey eyes, glossy brown hair, and a very determined little mouth. I would take her to be about twenty-seven years old. Her face is pale, and she seems a little nervous.

And Paul! Here he sits beside the woman who has been his fate, who has coloured his whole life, whose presence he assured me would strike him dumb with joy. What is he doing now? Chatting away on things in general with Marie, without so much as addressing a single word to Mrs. Viner, who, after giving her head a barely perceptible toss,

starts a literary and artistic conversation with me. The widow—Marie I mean—is a little “put out,” so am I. Here have we brought these two people together, and all to no purpose. As for Paul, I am disgusted with him. I can see very well, that though Mrs. Viner is conversing with such animation, she is listening all the while to what *he* is saying. Dear, oh dear! what a world this is for cross purposes!

After luncheon, the widow—Marie I should say—proposes a walk in the garden, with a meaning glance at me.

“There is not much to see there,” she continued, “save evergreens and a few winter flowers, but still it always seems to me a soothing sort of place,” and she laughed.

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughs Paul, “a capital word, *soothing*—just the word for a garden. Don’t you think so, Mrs. Viner?” and he turns smiling to her.

“Yes,” she answers, and then rises.

There is one thing very certain—Paul is in the best spirits I have seen him in for many a day. What has put him in such spirits? *Her* presence, of course. And yet he treats her in the most careless manner! Hang it all! it's enough to make me kick him.

On our way to the garden, Marie and I manage to walk on in front together.

“What is the matter, Phil?” she asks.

“How?”

“Why, I thought you told me Paul Joyce and Mrs. Viner were old sweethearts.”

“So they are, but that idiot Paul is as mad as a hatter,” I exclaim.

“Why, he must be!” cries Marie. “He has scarcely spoken two words to her. Does he think a woman will stand that treatment?”

“What are they at now?” I ask.

Marie looks round. “They are walking behind us, she stopping to look at the flowers on one side of the path, and he stopping

to admire the shrubs on the other," and the widow gives an exclamation of impatience.

"If you only knew how Paul loves that woman," I say.

"Fiddlesticks!" cries the widow; "he looks like a lover, doesn't he? Just turn and look at him now."

I turn my head, and see Paul walking a few yards behind Mrs. Viner, smoking a cigarette!

"And I thought we could have made him happy to-day," says the widow, "but he doesn't deserve to be happy."

"You are right, Marie," I answer; "he does not."

"Let us wait until she joins us," I say; "then you walk on with her, and leave Paul to me."

"Very well."

When Mrs. Viner reaches us she says, "Paul—I mean Mr. Joyce is still as great a slave as ever to tobacco."

“Oh ! I don’t think he smokes much,” I say.

“Don’t you ?” she exclaims ; “ I do.” And she walks on with Marie.

“ I say, Phil,” cries Paul, when he comes up to me, “ have you ever smoked this brand of cigarettes ? It is called the Zoonipoo Brand. They are the best cigarettes I have ever smoked. Must send for another box.”

“ Mrs. Viner has just been saying that you are a slave to tobacco,” I say.

“ Oh ! she’d say anything about me,” Paul says, laughing good-humouredly. “ It’s a way she has got, don’t you know. What a lovely garden this must be in the summer,” and he stops to have a look round.

“ Yes ; what do you think of Mrs. Viner ? Is she much altered ? ”

“ Not a bit,” he replies ; “ I declare she looks younger than ever. Wonder who it was she married. I quite forgot to ask her.”

Now I ask you, dear mad brother (or sister), who has (or have) been the ear-witness

and eye-witness of my most secret thoughts and most important deeds—have you ever heard of such an exasperating madman in all your experience as this madman Paul Joyce? Here he is talking in the most careless manner of this woman whom he loves, ay, more than life itself.

I'll *not* mention her name again in his presence. That will be dire punishment enough for one day.

Presently it is time to leave, and Mrs. Viner's horse stands at the door. As Paul does not offer to do so I assist her to the saddle, and away she goes without waiting for us to accompany her.

"What a truly charming woman," Marie says to Paul.

"Yes, she is rather nice, isn't she?" he replies in a patronizing tone.

"Nice," says Marie, flushing a little; "she is a great deal too nice to remain long single. I hope she will marry soon."



“So do I, Mrs. Wilson,” Paul says with a smile. “Good-bye.”

And we mount our horses and go on our way.

But I notice that Paul has become suddenly bereft of all his gaiety and spirits, and is silent and sad all the way home. Ah! he is once more on the rack of remorse and torture. Serve him right!

All during the evening he is restless, and walks from the library to the “smokery,” and from the “smokery” to the billiard-room, and then back to the library again.

In the latter apartment I now sit writing.

He has thrown himself into a chair, and has taken up one of the illustrated papers, which he runs through in a minute.

“Not much in any of the papers this week,” he exclaims.

“No.”

“Where are you going to-morrow?” he asks after a pause.

"Where am I going? Well, really, I have no particular engagement. Where would you like to go?"

"Oh, nowhere particular," he replies; "I have no special wish."

I finish my letter, fold it, put it in an envelope, and proceed to address it to my solicitor.

"Now I will leave you alone to finish your article," I say.

"Oh, I'm not going to finish it," he exclaims in a peevish tone.

"Oh, I'd finish it if I were you," I say; "what's the use of leaving things half accomplished?"

"What do you think of, er—Mrs. Viner?" is his next query. He wants to begin talking of her, but I won't gratify him.

"To tell you the truth I have not had time to form any opinion," I reply, and leave him.

No, no, Paul Joyce, your punishment is not complete yet.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### LITTLE TOWERS CALLS.

MISS CARRIE DIXON (of New York State) called this afternoon looking very pert and pretty indeed. After she had settled herself comfortably in an easy-chair, and had begun the process of toasting her toe at the bars of the grate, she said:

“Say, Mr. Brownlow, do you know those Tatte-Snarlows? My! ain’t they a treat?”

“I know them very well,” I answered.

“You do? Well, I guess you don’t know much,” she exclaimed.

“No?”

“No, indeed; you should just see them come around in a carriage and pair—old Mrs. Tatte-Snarlow and her two daughters and a

long thin son—such a guy!” and then she laughed merrily.

“Yes, he is rather tall and thin,” I observed.

“Tall! Thin! My! it would take two of him to make a shadow. Well, the old party gave herself all the airs and graces of a queen, and wanted to impress uncle and me with her superiority, but I soon let her see it was all too thin.”

“What was too thin?” I asked a little puzzled.

“Why, the whole shoot.”

“The whole *shoot*,” I repeated still more puzzled.

“Goodness me! what a greenhorn *you* are,” she cried; “why, you don’t know anything.”

“I don’t know much, certainly,” I admitted.

“Well, what I mean is this: old Mrs. What’s-her-name wanted to kill us with her grandeur, but I guess I let her see pretty quick that it wouldn’t wash; no, sir-ee.”

"Quite right," I said; "the Tattle-Snarlows are given to that sort of thing, I know."

"And another thing, Mr. Brownlow," she exclaimed with a wise look, "they Tattle-Snarlows are not gentry. I could spot that right away at a glance, anyhow. *They* haven't many ancestors to boast of. And I know what the old woman waltzed her son over for. Thinks I would be a good match with all uncle's dollars. Oh, my! They know their way about." And she fixed her eyes on me with a comical smile. "You see I know a thing or two. Say, where is Mr. Joyce?"

"I really cannot tell," I replied. "I expect he is smoking as per usual somewhere or another."

"Say, why don't he get married?" she next queried.

"I'm sure I don't know," I answered smiling at the question. "Why don't you ask him?"

"Ask him *what?*" she demanded.

"Why, the reason he has not married."

"Not me. Oh, I didn't tell you I was learning riding. Yes, sir-ee; I'm taking lessons three times a week and am getting on spry, I can tell you."

"I'm very glad to hear that," I said; "we have so few fair riders at our meets now."

"Wait till *you* see me next season," she cried; "I'll lead the field right slick, and don't you forget it."

"I'm sure you will be quite proficient by that time."

"You bet."

At this moment little Towers (moustache and all) was announced. By the way, that moustache seems to be actually growing larger day by day.

"Awh—how d'do, Miss Dixon?" he said sitting beside her.

"Oh, I'm all right, I guess; how are you?" And she eyed him with a critical glance.

"I'm very well, thanks—awh. Lovely weather?"

"Splendiferous," exclaimed Miss Dixon; "what you English call a mild winter."

"By the way, Towers, your gardener has met with a sad end," I observed. "Poor old fellow."

"Yes," he answered, "he must have been blown into the water during the gale. I expect he was going home by a short cut along the river." And he tried to look sad.

"I wonder does his daughter know of it?" I ventured to inquire.

"I really don't know," he answered, with a slight tinge in his cheek.

"Have you any idea of where she is?" I asked.

"Not the slightest," said the little liar blandly.

"But I thought you had recommended her as a domestic servant to some friends in London."

“Oh, yes,” he hastily answered, “but she left there long since.”

At this moment Miss Dixon, who had been looking towards the window, cried, “Oh, here comes Mr. Joyce.”

And presently Paul entered. Miss Dixon immediately began questioning and cross-questioning him about himself, his doings, and his designs with delightful *naïveté*, to all of which questions Paul returned the most perfectly straightforward, honest answers. All this time little Towers, who pretended to be listening attentively to my account of my cropper on Woodbourn Heath was covertly watching the pair with anxious eyes. Ho! ho! thought I, “wants to marry the little Yankee, does he? Well, he might do worse. But it strikes me that it is a million to one on Paul if he chooses to enter the running.”

\* \* \* \* \*

When they had departed, Miss Dixon in her phaeton, and little Towers in the saddle,



I said to Paul, "That little Yankee would make a capital wife for a man."

"Yes," he replied, "Towers should go on there."

"I don't fancy she is very much struck with our little master of hounds," I remarked. "Now I half believe, Paul, that you are the man for her—I mean according to *her* ideas."

"Now for goodness' sake, Phil, let us have no more of this," he exclaimed. "You ought to know me by this time."

Know him by this time. As if such a strange being, such a prize-puzzle could be ever really known!

\* \* \* \* \*

After luncheon, the day looks so genial, that I begin to feel genial and forgiving also, and accordingly say to Paul:

"I think we ought to ride over to Fairleigh Cottage, eh?"

Paul does not pretend to be very much

moved, but there is a sudden light in his eyes as he replies, "Yes, if you like."

And so we have our horses at the door in fifteen minutes, and in another couple of minutes are riding along the drive.

As we proceed, Paul becomes quite chatty and even funny.

"Why, you are in prime spirits to-day, Paul," I say smiling.

"Yes, it's the effect of the bright sun, so bright for this time of the year, you know, together with the exhilaration of riding," he says. "You know, Phil, riding is the finest exercise in the world."

"Yes."

"Oh, yes; makes your liver all right, and of course if your liver is all right, *you're* all right."

Presently I ask, "What have you done with those verses you wrote?"

"I've got them still. Why do you ask?" and he looks sharply at me.

“For no particular reason, only I think it would be a pity to destroy them.”

“Then you really think them good?” he inquires with a flush of pleasure.

“I do, indeed; of their kind they are capital.”

When we reach the gate at Fairleigh Cottage I say, “I hope we shall find them at home.”

“They are,” Paul exclaims; “at least *she* is. I have just caught sight of her at one of the windows.”

And sure enough Marion Viner stands at the door to welcome us, looking superbly handsome in a grey costume. There is just the slightest little flush on her pale cheeks as she shakes hands with us—after a natty little groom has taken charge of our horses.

“My brother is out riding,” she says, when we are all seated in the warm, cosy little sitting-room; “but I expect him home every moment.”

"I hope you don't feel lonely here," Paul says.

"No," she answers, looking away towards the fire, "except sometimes, when Harry is away for instance. Then I feel rather lonely."

And now her brother returns; a strong, sturdy, brown-bearded, grey-eyed young fellow. After being introduced to me, he shakes hands cordially with Paul.

"Why, it must be ten years since we last saw each other, Paul," he cries.

"Oh, not so long as that, Harry," his sister says. "Only about eight years I think."

"And quite long enough," he exclaims. "Not married yet?"

"No," answers Paul, with a swift and wholly unconscious glance at *her*.

"Neither am I," continues Harry. "We are both doomed to single blessedness."

And then he turns to me, and we both are immediately up to the eyes in a discussion on the Indian Empire. I find him to be a man

of immense information on all branches of the Indian subject, and listen to him with the greatest interest. Still, I have my eyes and ears open to all Marion and Paul are saying and doing. They are speaking in very low tones, but I can hear her telling him of her marriage with Mr. Viner. "It was Harry's wish," she says; "he had to leave me so often, for days at a stretch, and thought it best that I should marry and have some constant companion. Mr. Viner was more like a father than a husband."

"He was rather old," Paul says.

"Yes, nearly sixty."

And then they commence talking of old times, and seem as happy as two children at play. What a contrast to their last meeting! If Paul would only go in and win now all would be well.

But he doesn't, and presently it is time to leave.

"You seemed to be enjoying yourself to-

day, Paul," I say, when we are well on our way.

"Yes," he answers, "I was. How pretty Marion looked."

"Yes; now how was it that you treated the girl so coolly when you met her at Virgemont?"

He does not answer for a moment, then he says, "Phil, it was the old story over again: the instant I came into her presence my d——d idiotic, cool manner asserted itself."

"But, bless my soul! your repeated lessons ought to have cured you of that. Think of the misery and remorse you have endured."

"I do, I do," he replies; "but it is my cursed nature."

"At all events, you got on better to-day," I say; "though I suppose if I or her brother had not been in the way, and had you both been alone together, you would have acted the cool bored part over again?"

He won't answer, so I light a cigar, and puff away in silence the rest of the road home.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### MARION ADVISES PAUL.

It is just three days ago since we rode over to Fairleigh Cottage, and as we sit at breakfast Paul slowly reads a letter, and then exclaims:

“Bah!”

“What are you bahing at?” I ask.

“I’ll tell you,” he answers, and I notice that his face has lost some of its colour. “You talk of my being fickle and all the rest of it.”

“I certainly do.”

“Well, do you remember how well Marion and I got along the other day, when we went to visit her and Harry?”

“Yes, very well.”

“Do you remember saying you thought

those verses I showed you were rather good?"

"Yes, and I think so still."

"Well, Phil, I sent her those verses by post the night before last."

"Well, what does she think of them?"

"What does she think of them?" he echoes. "Read that," and he chucks me over the letter. I take it up, and read as follows:

"Fairleigh Cottage,

"Jan. 28th.

"DEAR PAUL,

"I return you the lines you were kind enough to send me. Please don't be offended, but I must ask you not to send me any more of such.

"You must also allow me to say that I am not in the habit of 'kissing fellows,' nor have I ever had what you are pleased to call a 'list of lovers,' and even if I had, your constituting yourself



one of said list is only on a par with some other of your vain imaginings.

“Yours sincerely,

“MARION VINER.”

“There, what do you think of that?” he exclaims, when I have finished reading. “Not much love in that epistle is there?”

“Oh! I don’t know so much about that,” I reply. “You see part of those verses have offended her. Show them to me.” He hands me the verses, and I come to the stanzas:

“And since you struck me off your list  
Of lovers, and dismissed me,  
How many fellows have you kissed?  
How many women kissed me?

“How many whispered talks were talked?  
How many vows were spoken?  
How many moonlit walks were walked?  
How many vows were broken?”

“You see, Paul,” I continue, handing him back the verses, “women are curious things.”

"I should think *they* were!" he exclaims.

"And, you see, they don't like being called flirts."

"Who called her a flirt?" he demands fiercely.

"You alluded to her 'list of lovers,' and furthermore, hint at her 'moonlit walks with men.'"

"Oh! that is merely a playful conceit."

"Yes, my dear boy, but you forget that all women—with the exception of Mrs. Wilson—are deficient in humour, and fail to see many of men's playful conceits."

"Oh, rubbish!" he exclaims.

"But it's not rubbish, Paul. And more over you ask her how many women kissed you? That is really and truly what has done for you."

"Oh, nonsense!" he cries angrily. "At any rate Mrs. Viner will never be again troubled with any of my poetry. Now I'm going to smoke." And away he goes.

Was there ever such a pair of mad mortals? Both loving each other deeply and fondly, but always at cross purposes.

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As luck will have it, Mrs. Viner and her brother drive over in the afternoon. I firmly believe she has proposed this visit for the express purpose of "making it up" with Paul; but he, of course, is on his "high horse," the hopeless idiot! The poor woman tries hard (within the limits of becoming modesty) to draw Paul into good humour, but without any apparent result. Harry Wynne and myself go even more deeply into the Indian financial question, but still I note the two *lovers*. Just listen to them. She speaks low; *he* affects a particularly loud tone, viz.:

MARION (*with a roguish look*): Well, and so you are not married yet, Paul?

PAUL: No, indeed! Hard to please, you

MARION (*smiling archly*): Are you really so hard to please?

PAUL: Positive fact, I assure you. Have you heard the new opera?

MARION: No. (*After a pause.*) Ahem! Where are those verses you sent me?

PAUL: Why do you ask?

MARION: Well, I think them rather good—though—the—er—lady is not the flirt you think her.

PAUL: I don't think anything at all about the matter. As for the verses you were kind enough to return, they are in ashes.

MARION (*with an angry flush*): Oh, indeed!

No, there is no use in trying to bring these two proud, stubborn hearts together. Even *she* has her little faults. She was pleased with those verses, yet she returns them with a curt note, and now she is angry because she hears they have been

burned. But for all that Paul is acting like an idiot. The girl has done all she could to make up for her hasty letter, but he won't cry *pax*; and so with an angry flush and a toss of her head she turns from him, and joins her brother and me on the Indian topic, and *seems* to forget the existence of such a being as Paul Joyce, as she relates her experiences of Indian servants and their manners and customs.

Suddenly Paul says: "I think I will leave England, and go on a journey through India," and he looks under his eyes at Marion.

"Yes, you should," she says, turning with a smile to him. "You will find it a most interesting country; I certainly should strongly advise you to go."

She should strongly advise him to go! I fancy I can hear Tom Pierce listening to her, and murmuring the mysterious word, "Walker." Yet she *seems* perfectly sincere.

"So you would really advise me to leave England?" Paul asks calmly, but with a slightly blanched face.

"Certainly I should," she declares. "Travelling is the most enjoyable of lives." And she closes her lips firmly.

Proud, stubborn little madwoman—prouder and more stubborn madman; I wash my hands of you both.

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By-and-by, after Marion and her brother have gone, I find Paul in the "smokery" pouring over—those verses; those verses which he told her he had burned. Ah! if he had only been sane enough to have handed them to her when she mentioned them.

"Phil," he says, "I want you to do me a great favour, like a dear old boy."

"Certainly," I say; "what is it?"

"I want you to let me go to London to-morrow."

“What?” I exclaim in surprise.

“Now don’t refuse, there’s a good fellow ; Tom Pierce will be a splendid substitute for me at your wedding.”

“But, Paul——”

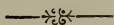
“Now there is no use in refusing me my wish; I am going to start for India.”

“Paul, Paul, will you ever learn wisdom?” I say, laying my hand on his shoulder.

“For God’s sake, don’t lecture me, Phil,” he says in broken accents; “I’m bad enough: there is only one thing for me.”

“And that is?”

“To do as *she* said, and leave England.” And then he breaks down, and sobs—my God, how the man sobs!



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### HONEYMOONING.

As I sit in the balcony of my hotel, I behold, promenading at my feet, in all the glory of buff boots and newest sporting suits, dozens of well-known frequenters of racing circles—mostly of the book-making persuasion; mixed with these I notice powerful advocates, successful dramatists, popular novelists, fashionable artists, society beauties, and favourite actresses and actors. Sure, never was seen so great a collection of celebrities! Besides all these mentioned, there are lords, dukes and earls galore, with their wives, or those who are not their wives. There goes “Bertie the Buzzer.” Why he is called the “Buzzer” I haven’t the slightest idea; but anyhow



he is heir to an earldom and sixty thousand a year. His companion is little Letty Cuff, a chorus girl from the "Frivolity." Letty is decidedly pretty, but "makes up" a great deal too thickly, and is too pronounced in bust and bustle. And now passes Lady Di—— no, I won't mention her name, her husband might not like it; *her* companion is the celebrated baritone from Covent Garden; I forget what the beggar calls himself, but he is a great pet with the ladies. And there is Jack Banner, the leading man at the Sheridan Theatre, which was built for Fanny Canning by old Flamson the Jew, who is something in the City, but Heaven alone knows what. Jack is a sleek, lady-like young fellow, and *the* great cup-and-saucer comedy lover; you will see his photo in every print shop from the Strand to Westbourne Grove. I don't know who the lady is, but there is a boulevard look about her boots. I wonder what

Jack's wife is doing at home in Hammer-smith?

Sir George Jeff, Q.C., has just passed, after stopping twice to look back at a little object in crushed strawberry, with pearl-grey bonnet. At his time of life, too! the gay old dog! Wouldn't it be fun if old Lady Jeff was watching him through her double glasses? A clever man Sir George; I recollect when he used to haunt the Old Bailey for the purpose of picking up a criminal client or two. But those days are over. Like Mr. Gilbert's Judge, he married the ugly daughter of a solicitor, and for a reward, had all the clients his father-in-law could procure him. He rose to eminence rapidly, and is now a great gun in the Divorce Court. He used to be a Radical in the Old Bailey days, but is now a Tory of the deepest dye, and also a colonel in the City Volunteer Hussars. But my eyes are growing tired with watching the con-

tinuous stream of people, and to rest them I look across there, to the blue sunlit sea.

I suppose, my dear mad brother (or sister), that you think I am stopping at Brighton during the summer race-week? Look at this paper I have opened to read, but have never read; it is called *Le Figaro*, and is dated March the seventh. Look at those sunny slopes behind there, dotted with villas flashing white in the sun; turn your eyes towards the sea—look at its depths of blue; observe those plants there by the marble pillars of my hotel: palm trees, acacias, cacti, prickly pears, and all the rest of them. Not very like Brighton, now is it? My dear sir (or madam), this is Monte Carlo, and the date is March the eighth.

Have I visited the Casino—the gambling hell? No, there are quite enough madmen there without me; one of those madmen blew out whatever superfluous brains he

might have possessed in one of the by-paths of the public gardens last night. They tell me he came here to escape the east winds so prevalent in London at this time of the year. The doctors' told him the only chance for him was Monte Carlo. Thither he came, and after losing all his money, together with his watch, studs, and all the rest of it at the green-board, he shot himself. The east wind of London could not have finished him off in less time. It appears his young wife on hearing the news, gave an uncommonly loud and piercing shriek and then fell back insensible ; when they brought her round it was only to find her a chattering idiot. But Monte Carlo is a very fashionable place, and, in point of fact, the "Beauty spot of the Riviera." The noble prince who is the ruler of this beauty spot takes good care that none of his subjects stake one single coin on the green-table. "Let those mad

foreigners, especially those terribly mad people from England, gamble away their wealth at my table, but don't let me catch any of you, my faithful subjects, risking your money at the fatal game; if I catch you I will clap you into prison." And he does.

We came here from Nice last Monday. My wife!——Oh, that reminds me, I have not informed you, dear mad brother (or sister), of my marriage. Yes, Mrs. Wilson and I became one, until death do us part, exactly sixteen days ago; Tom Pierce acting as substitute for poor Paul. A very smart wedding it was, I can assure you, in proof of which I refer you to the *Morning Post* of that date, not forgetting the *Torington Guardian*, which came out with a column and a half of most graphic matter on the affair, describing some of the dresses most minutely, besides enumerating the presents, and giving a short genealogical

account of the Brownlow family, in which, however, the writer twice mixes me up with other families of the same name who are no connections whatever. (But this by the way.) A most enterprising paper is the *Torpington Guardian*, and enjoys a circulation of upwards of fifteen hundred, and this, together with the county advertisements, of which it has the monopoly, besides a back page leased to a London advertising agent for ten pounds per week, makes it pay its proprietor fairly well.

Well, as I have said, we came here from Nice, and intend going back to Paris to-morrow. This place, just now, is too English, you know, as Miss Dixon (of New York State) would say. We English are the only people under the sun who avoid each other as much as we possibly can when abroad. Disliked by all people through whose country we travel, we dislike each other, just to be in the fashion.

No, I am wrong; we dislike each other because we are so sensible of each other's faults and failings. Have you ever noticed what a ruinous effect the sudden appearance of a policeman gives to the prettiest and most secluded of walks, in say, Kensington Gardens? Something of the same effect, only more so, is felt by me, on the sudden appearance of one of my own countrymen amid Continental surroundings.

And how have things been going on since that eventful evening when Paul Joyce decided on leaving Brownlow? He left the next morning; I myself driving him over to the station. He said he would "write soon," but up to the time of my marriage and departure for Paris, no letter arrived from him. Nor had any tidings come to hand regarding the mysterious disappearance of Sydney Barton, who, from the night he quitted his father's roof, has not been seen or heard of. Poor



Fanny was at our wedding, but looked awfully sad and fretted, though I noticed Tom Pierce did his utmost to comfort her. I have often noticed that our girls are far fonder of their brothers than of any other relative, either father, mother, lover, or husband. I think this curious trait is only to be found in English girls. French girls are very fond of their mothers, until they marry and have families, then all their love is for their little ones. Irish girls will desert all for their husbands, and American girls love no one better than they love themselves.

Talking of American girls, Miss Carrie Dixon (of New York State) looked very *chic* at our wedding, and was followed all over the church by little Towers. I wonder what Susan is doing? Mr. Butts did not attend our wedding; the widow—Marie I mean—quite forgot all about him.

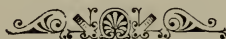
Nothing has been heard of the Duke of



Duchess of Stanton, and every one in the district is beginning to wonder if the Castle will ever behold its mistress again. It is certainly very curious that her grace should remain so long without writing even to her housekeeper. But no—not a line from either her or the duke.

What keeps Marie? We are going out to do the promenade just once, as Marie insists on letting people see that she is here. Delightful little madwoman.

Here she comes.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### STILL HONEYMOONING.

BACK again in Paris—beautiful, butterfly Lutetia, the pet of the world. Under king, directory, emperor or republic, always gay, grand and mighty; the centre of civilization. *Vive la France!*

It blows jolly cold on the boulevards though, all the same, and Marie, who is almost smothered in furs, clings closely to me, as she pops her head every other moment behind my shoulder to avoid the cutting east wind.

“Good gracious! Phil; this is almost as bad as London,” she exclaims.

“Not quite,” I say, “but it is bad enough.”

Cold and bleak as it is, however, the chief

boulevards are crowded with be-furred pedestrians, male and female, and the *cafés* seem to be doing a roaring trade. I think Paris is the place, *par excellence*, for pretty shop-windows; it has taken us nearly two hours to stroll from the Faubourg Montmartre to Durand's Restaurant, thanks to those same windows.

Presently Marie says, "Why, what a number of Americans there are here. I think every other minute I hear Carrie Dixon talking behind or before me, every second woman seems to have her accent."

"Yes, Paris is to the Americans what London is to the Germans—a paradise."

While gazing with amusement into an enormous toy emporium, Marie says, *sotto voce*, "Don't look round for the world."

"Why?"

"Because those horrid Tattle-Snarlows are standing behind us. You know we never sent them any cards;" and then, after a

minute: "Thank goodness, they have gone on. What a relief!"

So on we proceed, after having a long look at the windowful of walking dolls, talking dolls, laughing dolls and crying dolls, all dressed to death as Marie says. We bid adieu to these and their wonderful houses (each as red and as new as a Chislehurst villa), and also to the numerous representations of the *brav' général* in tin, pasteboard, composition and wax; mounted on his famous charger, marching up and down outside a half a foot of cardboard battlements, with his sword drawn; sparring, with boxing gloves, a German with long hair and goggle spectacles and giving him a punch in the stomach at stated intervals; taking off his hat and putting it on again; and other actions too numerous to mention. Boulanger seems to be as popular in the nursery as he is on the boulevards.

Presently Marie, after noticing a theatrical poster, exclaims, "Oh, Phil! you must take me to the opera to-night, my favourite 'Faust' is announced."

"Very well," I answer. "Now let us get back to dinner."

Just at this moment a hand claps me on the back, and a voice cries, "Ha! ha! we meet again," in mock tragic tones. It is Tom Pierce.

"And when did you arrive here?" I ask as we three proceed along together.

"Yesterday," he answers. "Wanted to see the new comedy at the Palais Royal."

"Wanted to crib something out of it?" I say smiling.

"Right you are, Phil; that's the idea."

"Have you heard or seen anything of Sydney Barton?" Marie asks him.

"Not a word," he answers. "What a drivelling idiot the man must be. I wonder how he is managing to exist, though."

Any money he may have had is all gone by this time." And Tom looks troubled for a moment.

"Oh! he'll turn up all right," I say. "And now you must come and dine with us, and afterwards give us the honour of your company at the opera."

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We are late for the first act of "Faust," and Marie is accordingly inclined to be cross, but the rising of the curtain on the second act, with its lively music and full stage, puts her in good humour once more, and she settles down to enjoy the performance.

The house is crowded, and a very brilliant sight it presents. I can only see two boxes empty—one in front of where we sit, and the other right in the centre of the house. I soon turn my eyes to the stage, and am enjoying Valentine's beautiful solo, when Tom whispers, "Phil, look."

“Where?” I ask.

“At that box opposite; see who has just entered it?”

I look towards the box; a lady and gentleman have entered it, and are now seated back in the shade. But I can spot them—they are the Duchess of Stanton and Signor Tontine.

“There, what do you think of that?” Tom says.

“Oh! I am not at all surprised,” I say; and then some instinctive feeling makes me turn and look towards that other vacant box in the centre; just as I do so a lady and gentleman enter it. It is now my turn to whisper to Tom, “Look!” He does so, and says in a low voice, “Great Scott!” The cause of his surprise and mine is bred of the fact that the pair we are looking at consists of the Duke of Stanton and a lady—name unknown.

Marie all this time is too engrossed with

the opera to notice anything in front, thank goodness.

"I say," Tom whispers, "if the duke spots Tontine with his wife, there will be an explosion."

"Possibly. Who is his companion I wonder?"

"Oh! one of the *demi-monde*," he replies. I think he is about right.

The act is coming to a close, when the duke catches sight of his wife and her companion. Tom and I see him rise and leave his box.

"By Jove! he is going round to them," Tom exclaims.

"Yes, there is going to be a row—a serious row," I answer.

The door of her grace's box opens; the duke enters, hands his card to the signor, and goes out again. As the door closes behind him, the duchess, who has been stricken dumb with shame and terror, falls insensible



from her chair just as the act-drop comes down.

“Oh! that was magnificently sung all round,” Marie exclaims, beaming with pleasure. “Have you not enjoyed it?”

“Yes, very much,” I answer; and Tom declares he never heard such a Faust before.

And then she gives us leave to go out and enjoy a cigarette. Out we go just as the signor is conducting the half-conscious duchess from her box. In the corridor we meet the duke; he has evidently made some excuse to his fair companion, and is on the point of leaving the theatre.

“Ah, Brownlow!” he exclaims, “I’m glad I have met you.”

“Yes?”

“Yes; can you give me your services to-morrow morning at daybreak? I have a little affair on hand.”

“I understand,” I answer; “but I am on my wedding tour.”

"What, married?" he cries, smiling.

"Yes, married at last. But here is my friend, Tom Pierce, a cousin of Sydney Barton's; he, I am sure, will put himself at your service."

"Certainly," is Tom's answer.

"Thanks, very much," Stanton says, producing a card and writing his present address on it. "There is my address, Mr. Pierce, and I shall expect you at five o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Agreed; I shall be there," Tom says.

And shaking hands with us both the duke leaves us.

"Gone home to make his will," Tom remarks.

"Yes: I hope he won't fall."

When we are seated again I notice that the opposite box is still empty; the duchess and her companion have also left the theatre; the duke's companion still remains and is now engaged in ogling an old gentleman in the next box.

During the next act Tom says, "I thought you told me the Duke of Stanton was away in the Rocky Mountains shooting bears or eagles or some such small game?"

"Yes, so I understood."

"He must have grown tired of it very soon."

"Oh! you forget that he has been away for over ten months," I say. "Now let us listen to the music."



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE DUCHESS IS SET FREE.

My first thought on opening my eyes this morning was, "How has the duke fared in his encounter with the tenor?"

And all during breakfast I am more or less taken up with the same thought, much to Marie's uneasiness.

"I'm sure there is something preying on your mind, Phil' dear," she says; "do tell me what it is."

"My dear Marie, you are quite mistaken; I am tired of sight-seeing, that is all."

"Very well, then," she says; "we will return home to-morrow."

"Oh, no! I am not quite so bad as that," I remark laughing.

“Now I know better,” she exclaims.  
“We *go* to-morrow.”

What a curious arrangement the post office is here. I told Tom to write me a note after the duel and to post it at once; but stay!—why, he couldn’t have time to post before seven o’clock, consequently his letter will not arrive here until about two; perhaps he will remember that, and come himself.

Oh, here comes the *garçon* with a letter. It is from Paul, and has been forwarded on from Brownlow. It bears the Southampton post-mark also. Now to hear what the poor fellow intends doing next:

“Crown Hotel,

“Southampton,

“March 10th.

“DEAR PHIL,

“Allow me, ere I embark for India (there to travel for a year or so), to congratulate you on your marriage, which

I saw duly chronicled in the papers. I would have written long ere this only I did not know where to address to; even now I am still in the dark, but chance Brownlow in the hope that they know your address and will forward my letter.

“Yes, I am bound for India, where *she* told me to go. You see I obey her slightest wish. When I do India I shall go on to China and from thence to Japan; and then, God knows where. England I will not return to for many a long year—perhaps never. Heavens! how different all this might have been if I had only a little tact and common-sense. But it is useless, Phil; I never can change my stubborn nature; and *she*—*she* is almost as stubborn; you *know* she is — and so it is that we are both asunder.

“All my hopes and all my ambitions are dead—dead and buried. Oh, Phil, how I wish I myself were dead. It is a wicked wish,

but I cannot help it; my heart is broken. I believe the Joyce Society is becoming very great and active; I wish them all success, that is all I can do. I cannot work any more.

“God bless you, and make your married life a happy one.

“Your affectionate friend,

“PAUL JOYCE.”

Poor Paul! There goes one of the most miserable men who ever left England on his travels. What a warning to young fellows that man's life is! All his misery is entirely his own making. Well, yes, *she* is a little to blame too—she, who is pining away, and eating her heart out, in Fairleigh Cottage. Such is love when it takes up its abode in self-willed, stubborn hearts.

Ah! here comes a letter, per hand, from Tom. It bears no address and is written in evident haste.

“DEAR PHIL,

“I have bad news, so prepare yourself for it. I met the duke in the grey dawn this morning, and entered a close carriage with him, which immediately set off at a quick pace towards the south. Three-quarters of an hour brought us to a quiet road-way with market gardens on one side and a thick wood on the other (divided from the road by a low paling). Here the coach stopped and we got out, and crossing the palings, entered the wood. Just as we did so, a gentleman came up to us and raising his hat said, ‘The Duke of Stanton, I presume.’

“‘Yes,’ answered my companion.

“‘This way,’ said the stranger, who spoke English, by the way, with a strong Italian accent. We followed him and soon reached a clearing, where we beheld Tontine and another gentleman, who I found to be a surgeon. The gentleman who had conducted



us thither now introduced himself as Tontine's second, and he and I lost no time in arranging the distance, &c. Tontine had chosen pistols as the weapons. By the way, now I had better tell you, that on the duke seeing his wife and Tontine together, he on his way to the box wrote on his card in French, 'Meet me to-morrow morning at six o'clock in St. Vincent's Wood. Choose your weapons.' Short and sweet, was it not? In a very little time all was ready, and Stanton and his opponent stood face to face. It was my duty to give the signal to fire—which signal was the dropping of a handkerchief.

"I counted one, two, three, slowly to myself, then gave the signal. Ba-bang! and Stanton staggered and fell. The surgeon and I were kneeling by him in an instant. But the former immediately shook his head. And well he might—His Grace the Duke of Stanton was shot dead.

“Come over to the hotel (D’Alcourt’s, Rue Victoire) at once. The surgeon and myself brought the body back in safety and unnoticed. No one in the hotel, save the staff, know anything about the affair. Come at once.

“In haste,  
“TOM.”

So, Her Grace is free. Now to tell Marie, and then go over to D’Alcourt’s and arrange for the transmission of the remains to Stanton Castle.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### HOME AGAIN.

WELL, here we are back in Brownlow once more -- having returned from Paris exactly a month ago. Tom Pierce and myself arranged everything in connection with the removal of poor Stanton's remains from Paris to England. We had some trouble with the police authorities at first, for Tontine was too proud and elated at being called out by a real English duke, and actually killing him, to keep silent, so he told the whole story to a reporter of the *Figaro* and then crossed over to Italy. Such being the case the police wanted to claim the body until the whole affair was thoroughly sifted -- but even the dead body of an English duke is not to be trifled with, and accordingly,

we enlisted the aid of certain high officials, and were allowed to coffin and bring home the remains in peace. And William, sixth Duke of Stanton, now sleeps with his ancestors in the family vault beneath our parish church.

It appears that ere he had been in the Rocky Mountains district two months, he grew tired of hunting for bears who never appeared, and so gave up the *sport*, and returning to New York, took ship from there to France, intending to return to Stanton Castle *viâ* Paris. Picking up with a famous member of the *demi-monde*, he brought her to the opera on the eve of that fatal morning in St. Vincent's Wood.

He hastily drew up a will, in which he desired all his wife's goods and chattels—books, jewellery, and such things—to be forwarded to her immediately. He also directed that the residue of the fortune she brought him, and which at the time lay in the bank

(and does still in fact) should be also returned to her.

And where is she? Heaven alone knows Her "belongings" still remain in the Castle, no one knowing where to forward them to. A cousin of the late duke now reigns at Stanton. He is unmarried, and consequently, all the households containing marriageable daughters throughout the county are in a flutter of excitement and expectation.

"My dear," I say to Marie, "there is a chance for Miss Dixon."

"How do you mean?" she asks.

"Why, at Stanton Castle; the new duke might marry her, if she——"

"No," she replies; "I think the Stantons have had enough of Yankee wives for some time. Besides, don't you know?"

"Know what?"

"Why, of Carrie Dixon's engagement to Mr. Towers."

"Never!" I exclaim.

"A fact ; they are to be married next June at St. George's, Hanover Square. Carrie insists on that," and my wife smiles, "because it is so fashionable."

"Well, you surprise me," I say ; "I never thought she would marry such a little tomtit as Towers."

"Oh, I expect she grew tired of waiting. By the way, Marion Viner called here yesterday while you were out. What do you think? Her hair is becoming quite grey, and she has grown positively thin and haggard-looking."

"I'm not at all surprised at that," I say ; "she knows she drove away the man she loved through mere pique. That must be quite enough to make her wrinkled and grey."

"Ah, the poor girl!" is Marie's exclamation, "I pity her sincerely."

My being out when Mrs. Viner called yesterday was due to the fact that I had

ridden over, to make inquiries about Syd, to Woodbourn. But nothing was known there of his whereabouts.

“Oh, Phil, I do wish we could hear something of him,” poor Fanny cried. “Papa is fretting his life away, though he never mentions his name.”

And the old squire certainly looked ten years older than when I saw him last. He spoke in subdued tones, and seemed to have quite lost his fiery temper.

“I tell you what we must do,” I said to Fanny, as I was leaving; “you and your father must come up and stay with Marie and I when we go to town, which will be in a couple of weeks. The change will do the old man good; and who knows but we might drop across some one who has heard of or seen Sydney. Never fear, Fanny, all will come right in the end.”

“I hope so, Phil,” she said with a forced smile; “and thank you very much for your

kindness in inviting us to town. Yes, I will coax papa to come."

"That's right ; and *how* is your aunt ?"

"Greatly altered, too," she answered ; "she has never left her room since *that* night."

On the way back to Brownlow I thought of all sorts of schemes for intrapping that eminent madman Sydney ; but none of them seemed to suit when I began to go into them thoroughly. Private detectives seems the best idea.





## CHAPTER XXII.

### SUSAN CUTS UP ROUGH.

MAY the eighth, and glorious weather, sees us in our house—taken for the season—in Mayfair. Moreover, this bright May morning sees Marie and myself preparing for the wedding of Miss Carrie Dixon (of New York State) with little Towers.

“I do believe we shall be late,” Marie cries. “Is the carriage at the door, Jane?”

“Yes, madam.”

“That’s all right.”

I, being dressed, leave my wife in the hands of her maid and enjoy a quiet cigar. By the way, I have nearly forgotten that I have been compelled to accept the duty of giving the bride away. This is how that came about.

Miss Carrie Dixon (of New York State) called upon us last week.

"Say," she observed; "I guess somebody has got to give me away on my wedding-day. Ain't that so, anyhow?"

"Yes," I answered; "it is the usual custom."

"Well, that's all right then," she continued; "but it strikes me it's funny. I give myself right away, don't I?"

"Certainly you do when you accept a husband," Marie answered.

"That's so; well now, how am I going on? What's the matter with *me*?" and she laughed. "I guess I have no one to give me away but myself."

"Won't your uncle do so?" I asked.

"No," she answered; "not if I know it. I'm not going to have my wedding spoiled by any of his nervous fussiness—don't *you* fret. Uncle would begin coughing and blowing his nose like thunder, and would set all

the folks giggling, which would make me real mad. No; I have told uncle he must stop at home until the show is over. Then we will go back with you all and have a splendid spread at the hotel."

"But you must have some one to give you away, dear," Marie urged. (Women are so particular about every detail connected with weddings.)

"That's what's the matter," replied the little Yankee; "and so I came right away here to know if Mr. Brownlow would work the oracle."

"With pleasure," I replied, laughing at the expression, which had completely mystified Marie. "I'll give you away, Miss Dixon, though a slightly older man would have been a better selection."

"Oh, you're old enough for the job," she replied; whereupon Marie looked a little "put out" for an instant, but she joined me in laughter.

And so it was settled that I should give away the bride at the altar. And now here comes Marie, looking very dainty and pretty indeed.

\* \* \* \* \*

The church is crowded with those who are guests, and those who are not. The three Miss Tatte-Snarlows are bridesmaids, together with three other girls, who are strangers to me ; and the bride, looking particularly nice, has just taken the arm of her future lord and master (who is looking even a little more foolish than usual), and both are now walking down the aisle, the nuptial knot being tied and the register signed. Marie and I walk directly behind the bridesmaids, with all the rest of the guests in a cluster after us, as the organ peals out the Wedding March. When we get to the church door we see the usual crowd of women, together with a sprinkling of men, waiting in a line to the carriage, while a stalwart policeman

represents the law. We all pause at the door until the bride and bridegroom proceed to their carriage. This they do in double quick time. Little Towers hands his bride into the carriage, and is in the act of following her, when a woman suddenly makes a rush at him, and ere the policeman can interfere, has shaken the little bridegroom—holding him by the collar of his coat—as a dog would shake a rat. It is Susan Hemming!

Susan, but how altered!—dirty, slatternly and bloated by drink. The policeman hustles her away, and asks little Towers if he intends “charging her.” “No,” he answers, as he stands trembling and white by the carriage door, while the crowd jeer and all the guests stand astonished. In fact, the three Miss Tattle-Snarlows have looked around to see if there were three male guests handy in case they fainted.

“Say, you come right in here,” cries the

bride to her lord and master. "I guess you look mighty foolish."

Her lord and master obeys; but as the carriage door shuts, a couple of roughs seize the horses' bridles, and Susan rushes forward with a miserable-looking, dirty and evidently half-starved infant in her arms, while the crowd of women surround the policeman and keep him from reaching the carriage.

"Hey," she cries through the carriage window, "you Towers! You're going away with your wife, ain't you? What about me, that you enticed up to London from my father's house, and made me what I am, damn you? You're a beauty, ain't you? leaving your child to starve. Look, ma'am, this is his child and I am its mother—and he gives me nothing to support it. No, blast him! Took me up to London and then deserted me. A nice husband you've got, good lady——"

But here the policeman succeeds in break-

ing through the crowd, and unceremoniously hustles Susan and her baby from the carriage door. The men who hold the horses' heads, seeing this, stand aside, and off goes the carriage double quick, amid the jeers and hooting of the crowd.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so the splendid "wedding-breakfast" ordered by Mr. Butts at the Hotel Métropole went untouched—not one of the guests turning up. The scene at the church door had completely taken away their appetites.

And all the "numerous and costly presents" which were arranged for show, also went unseen. Those same presents included a large reading lamp on a silver stand from me, and a set of Ruskin's works (complete) from Marie. I, myself, am rather sceptical as to the interest either Towers or his wife will take in the works of grand old John, but a set of his books being a fashionable

wedding present just now, Marie of course insisted on choosing them.

“The poor little woman,” she said, as we drove back from church this morning; “she will remember her wedding-day! *What* a disgraceful scene, Phil!”

“Yes, but it serves him right.”

“Who is the woman?”

“His late gardener’s daughter. He enticed her to London, telling her father he had procured her a situation in some friend’s house.”

“The little wretch!” exclaims Marie. “But didn’t she give him a shaking?” And my wife laughs at the recollection of the scene.

The bride and bridegroom were, an hour after they quitted the church, on their way to the Continent.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### NEWS OF THE LOST ONE.

ONE or two of yesterday's evening papers must have made a good thing out of little Towers and his shaking, for the contents sheet of one bore, in large type, "EXCITING SCENE AT A WEDDING: BRIDEGROOM HORSE-WHIPPED AT THE CHURCH DOOR;" and the other placard put it even stronger, for it had "STARTLING SCENE: BRIDEGROOM SHOT IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH!" Wonderful imaginations these reporters have!

Mr. Butts swears he won't pay for the wedding-breakfast, as he affirms that "there was no wedding-breakfast." However, I think the lawyers will convince him that he is wrong.

As I sit reading the morning paper, Jen-

kins comes to tell me that there is a dog fancier in the hall who wants to know if I would think of buying a French poodle, and that if so, he has a beauty.

"No, I don't want any dogs," I reply.

"He told me to say that his name was Ben Bantim, sir," continues Jenkins.

"Bantim!" Marie exclaims. "Why that's the man who was at Woodbourn."

"Yes, I remember now," I say.

"Oh! go down to him, Phil. He might have some news of Sydney."

"You are right," and down I go to interview the footman's understudy, who stands in the hall with a toy terrier (all ears) under each arm, and a black poodle shaved within an inch of his life—save the tip of his tail, his head and haunches—held by a chain.

"Well, Bantim?"

"Good-mornin', sir, good-mornin'. I seen by the *Mornin' Post* that you was in town, sir."

“ Oh ! you take in the *Morning Post*, then ? ”

I say.

“ No, not hexactly that, sir, but in the pub which I uses the landlord is a red 'ot Tory an' won't allow no paper into 'is bar but the *Times*, *Telegraph* an' *Mornin' Post*. So these yer papers are just the ones for me.”

“ Why ? ”

“ Well, you see, sir, they all gives the arrivals of gents in town. An' when I see the arrival of, say, you, sir, for instance, I notes down the address, an' I says to myself, I says, I'll call there, I says, to-morrow an' see if he wants a dorg. Do you see, sir ? ”

“ Oh, yes,” I say laughing. “ You read the papers solely on business principles ? ”

“ That's it, sir ; what do you think of this yer poodle ? He's a good 'un, 'e is, an' would just do for the missus, sir.”

“ No, Bantim, we have more than enough of dogs in the country.”

“ Ay, sir, I suppose you have,” he says,

preparing to go. "I 'ope all in Woodbourn are all right, sir—Miss Fanny in particular."

"Yes, they are all quite well. Indeed, Miss Fanny and the squire are coming up this week to stay a while with me. By the way, I suppose you haven't seen Mr. Sydney in your travels."

"Yes, sir, I 'as," he replies; "twice."

"Twice, eh? Where and when?"

"Within this last week. You see, sir, I does a good stroke of business in the dorg line out by them villars along Richmond way. Watch-dogs goes like one o'clock thereabouts. Buys them to frighten burglars. Well, last Monday I went with a collie to Miss Fayncourt, the celebrated actress, sir, but you know her, of course."

"Miss Fayncourt!" I exclaim, a sudden thought striking me.

"Yes, sir—her that stopped a night at Woodbourn—don't you remember, sir? The

night of the storm, it was. Her horse was killed on the north ridge."

"Yes, yes," I say. "Does she live in Richmond?"

"Not exactly Richmond, sir, but a little way beyond it. Oh! but it is a grand place, with a lawn in front as smooth as a skittle alley, an' a 'all hall 'ung with plates an' dishes. It's called Victoria Villar."

"Well, about Mr. Sydney?"

"Yes, sir. Well, as I was sayin', I was goin' along with the collie, an' was about half a mile from Victoria Villar, when who should I see comin' along the road, with a Gladstone bag in his 'and an' a straw 'at on, but Mr. Sydney."

"And did you speak?"

"I stood till he come up, but the instant he clapt eyes on me he looked the other way and walked quick past me."

"Well, didn't you say something?" I ask.

"Yes, sir, you may be sure I wasn't goin' to

let him pass after what Miss Fanny said to me. So I called out 'Mr. Sydney, don't you know me—Ben Bantim?' An' he never spoke, but did a guy down the next turn."

"Well, what then?"

"Well, sir, of course I didn't attempt to foller 'im when I seed he didn't want to speak, so I went on my way to Miss Fayncourt's and 'anded over the collie. At the same time I didn't forget to tell her that I remembered her in Woodbourn, and what do you think she says, sir?" And Ben looks at me as if he was asking a new conundrum.

"What did she say?"

"Why, she says, says she, 'Do you know if Mr. Sydney has gone back to Woodbourn yet?' 'Well, miss,' says I, 'that's a funny question, 'cause I'm just after meetin' 'im.' With this she looked at me astonished an' says, 'Where did you meet 'im?' and I says, 'Why, about 'arf a mile from 'ere, miss.' An' with that she says, 'Are you sure?' and I answers,

‘As sure as my name’s Ben Bantim ; I think I ought to know Mr. Sydney, miss.’ And when I told her I didn’t stop ’im she got regularly cross-looking, an’ thinkin’ she was goin’ to round on me I slung my ’ook.”

“And what was the second occasion on which you saw Mr. Sydney ?” I ask.

“Why, only yesterday, sir.”

“Where ?”

“At about a mile from the same spot where I seed him on Monday. He come along the road towards me, but he foxes me most the same minnit as I pipes ’im, an’ he does a double an’ skates. I was goin’ to chivey ’im—I was, straight, sir, but then I thinks to meself, if Mr. Sydney don’t want to see me that’s good enough.”

“Was it about the same hour on each occasion when you met him ?” I ask.

“It was about two o’clock on the Monday, an’ I reckon it must have been after three yesterday. I wrote a note to Miss Fanny, as

she asked me, sir. I ain't much of a dab with the pen, but I think I said all I had to say square enough."

"Very well, Ben, here is something for your trouble, and give me your address."

"Thank you, sir, an' 'ere's my card," and Ben, handing me the card, departs in peace with his "dorgs."

The card, which sets forth that Ben is a "dealer and breeder of dogs to the nobility and gentry at large," I place in my pocket, and go upstairs to give Marie my information concerning the lost one.

"Oh! Phil, we must find him," is her exclamation.

"Certainly, my dear, but how?"

"Why, we must think of some way. Fanny and her father arrive this day week; we must all four hold a council of war on the subject."

"The squire will not move in the matter," I say.



"Oh, nonsense," she answers; "we can soon coax him round." And I firmly believe that my wife could coax any man round.

I take up the paper once more, and by chance the first heading my eye lights on is "INDIAN INTELLIGENCE," and then I read, with hushed breath, "Mr. Paul Joyce, an Englishman, lately arrived, died of sunstroke in Calcutta on Friday."

"Dead!" I exclaim, flinging down the paper in grief, "dead, dead!"

"Who, dear?" cries Marie, coming up to me and placing her arms round my neck; "who, dear?"

"Paul Joyce."

She picks up the paper and reads the fatal paragraph. Then after a pause she says, "Perhaps there is some mistake, Phil dear. There may have been another Englishman named Paul Joyce in Calcutta. Why it is a very common name in Ireland and

Wales." But she knows well that there is no mistake. There never *is* in such cases.

And so that is the end of poor Paul and his Intellectual Monarchy! Another brilliant young career cut short through Dan Cupid. For be it known unto all that this Love which we sometimes imagine has left the world, is still rampant, and is the primary cause of most of the misfortunes and deaths amongst us mad mortals.

Poor Paul! what might you have not been but for your own strange nature and *her* proud stubborn heart? It was only last week I was reading an account of a meeting of the Joyce Society which was very successful. In fact, the society now numbers two thousand members in London alone, and I understand they are appointing branches not only throughout Great Britain but in many continental cities.

But fancy a man leaving England to die in Calcutta because a woman, through pique,

advised him to go! And, remember, men do this sort of thing every day, all these eighteen hundred and odd years having failed to make men understand women any better than at first.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE LOST ONE FOUND.

THE squire and Fanny arrived yesterday evening, and strange to say Tom Pierce called to-day. In fact he is here now, talking to me. He is very sorry about Paul.

“What on earth brought him to Calcutta in June?” he asks in surprise.

“Fate,” I answer, “fate and madness.”

“Must have been,” he says, “no man in his senses would think of going.”

And then we began to talk about Sydney—the squire not being present. (He is writing in the library.)

“Has Fanny told you about receiving a letter from that dog-fancier man about Syd?” he asks.

“Yes, the man called here last week, and

told me all about it," I answer. "It appears that he met Syd in the same district on each of the two occasions."

"Close to Richmond, wasn't it?"

"Yes, and carrying a Gladstone bag; I wonder what that meant?"

"Oh, goodness knows," Tom exclaims. "Perhaps he was looking for quiet lodgings; though I don't think a man like Syd would bury himself away out there. Still it *is* curious, the man meeting him twice in the same locality."

"Yes, and more curious still, Bantim was going to Miss Fayncourt with a dog on the first occasion."

"Miss Fayncourt!" exclaims Tom.

"Yes, and it was only quite casually Bantim mentioned the fact. I thought at the time that there might be some connection between her residence in the locality and Syd's mysterious appearance there; but in questioning the man he assured me that Miss

Fayncourt was as much surprised on the point as I was."

"It's very curious, all the same," Tom says. Then, after a "little think," he jumps up, and looking at his watch, exclaims, "Phil, are you game to try an adventure?"

"What kind?"

"Listen: it is half-past twelve; we can get to Richmond in an hour from now. Let us go and prowl around the district on the off chance of dropping across Sydney."

"Not a bad idea?" I say rising.

"Hold on," Tom says, "we *must* get the squire to accompany us. How will we manage that?"

I think for a moment and then say, "Let us say we are going to take a run out of town just to see how the country really looks in June."

"Yes, that will do."

Here Marie and Fanny come in, and we tell them of our plan.

“Capital!” Marie says. “I *do* hope you will be successful. But are you going before you lunch?”

“Yes,” I say, “we should be too late otherwise.”

And at this moment the squire enters. He seems to be aging every day, and now stoops somewhat, but is still agile as a youth.

“Uncle Jack,” Tom says, “Phil and I are going to have a run down by train to Richmond, just to see the Thames in June. Come along with us.”

“Do, papa,” Fanny says; “it will quite brighten you.”

“Do you think so, dear?” he says with a sad smile. “Well I will go, if Phil won’t think an old man a nuisance.”

“Old man, forsooth!” I cry. “Why you are lighter on your legs and heartier than many a young man of twenty.”

“Indeed that is quite true,” Marie ob-

serves. "Now make haste, and be home in good time for dinner."

\* \* \* \* \*

And so here we are, as some distant clock strikes two, wandering around Royal Richmond and chatting about Farmer George and many another notoriety, royal and otherwise, who have lived and died by the silvery Thames. Since we started, Tom and I have strenuously avoided all mention of Sydney, but we are nevertheless keeping a sharp lookout for that hot-tempered son of a hot-tempered sire. The squire seems to be pleased that we are with him, or that he is with us, and suddenly he says, "Boys, I wish we could find my son."

It is the first time he has mentioned Syd's name since *that* night, and Tom and I look at each other in regular surprise.

"So do I," I hasten to say.

"And I, my dear uncle," Tom adds.



“And, what’s more, we *must* find him. He is sure to be in London somewhere.”

“Yes,” I say, “he can’t have any funds to leave it with.”

“No, poor fellow,” the squire says with a tremor, “I don’t think he has any money at all, and that is what is fretting me.” And the old man turns away his head and blows his nose.

“Don’t you fret, uncle,” Tom exclaims in a cheery tone, “don’t you fret; we will find him.”

“Phil, and you, Tom,” says the squire, taking an arm of each of us as we saunter along, “I have been an old stubborn fool. But for my false pride I would have advertised for him in the *Times*, begging of him to return, married or single—ay, married or single. Or I could have employed a private detective, but no, I was too stubborn to do either.” Then after a pause he says, “I’m glad you brought me with you, for now I

have told you how I feel with regard to my dear son."

"Ah! my dear Mr. Barton, it pleases me more than you can tell to hear you speak so," I say. "And really, if Syd should ever marry Miss Fayncourt, I assure you I think he will have made a capital match."

"I should think so indeed," Tom exclaims. "Why she has refused some of the best offers in the kingdom, including the Duke of Barclay and Sir Francis Brereton, of Tubbercloney, co. Louth."

"Indeed!" exclaims the old man, evidently surprised.

"Oh, yes," Tom proceeds. "By the way, it is not generally known that Fayncourt is only an assumed name. Her real name is Norton, and her father was the late Canon Norton, of Coombe Hatton."

"You don't tell me so?" says the squire in astonishment.

"Oh, indeed I do," answers his nephew.

“Dear, oh dear, what a fool I have been,” mutters the squire, half to himself, “what an old fool I have been.” Then, turning to me, he says, “Phil, do you remember proving to me that I was mad?” and he smiles.

“You are not a bit more mad than other people,” I say.

“I don’t know about other people, but I agree with you that I am, or have been, mad,” he exclaims, “very mad.”

“By the way, talking of Miss Fayncourt, she lives about here, somewhere or other,” Tom says, as if the idea had just occurred to him.

“Yes,” I say, “I believe she has got a perfect picture of a place.”

“Very likely,” the squire says. “Canons’ daughters are noted for their artistic tastes.”

Here Tom catches my eye and motions me to look ahead to the right. I do so, and observe a Queen Anne villa peeping its head

above a thick shrubbery. This is Miss Fayncourt's.

"By Jove! I am beginning to feel both tired and hungry. I wish some good Samaritan would bring us in, and rest and refresh us."

"I cordially confess I feel I could do with something of the sort myself," I say.

On we walk until we come right opposite to the gate, upon the pillars of which is carved in a granite slab "VICTORIA VILLA."

"Oh, what a charming little residence," cries Tom in rapture, pausing to look through the gate. "Some person of taste dwells here, that's certain."

And more certain still, the person of taste had spied Tom from one of the windows of the villa, and now comes tripping down the path.

"Why, if it isn't Miss Fayncourt," cries Tom in tones of very great astonishment.

"Who did he say? Miss Fayncourt, eh," asks the squire.

“Yes,” I answer. “How curious that we should have just been speaking of her.”

“Very curious, very curious indeed,” says the squire. “I have been wantonly rude to the lady, and should like to apologize.”

The actress by this time has arrived at the gate, opened it, and shaken hands cordially with Tom. He says a few hurried words to her, and she immediately advances towards the squire and myself, who are standing a few yards from the gate.

“Mr. Barton, is it not?” she says, extending her hand.

The old man takes off his hat, and holding it in one hand, takes Miss Fayncourt’s with the other, as he says with old-fashioned courtesy: “Miss Fayncourt, I have been guilty of the most unwarrantable and unmanly rudeness and discourtesy to a stranger and a lady while beneath my roof. I am heartily ashamed of myself, and most humbly beg her pardon.”

“Oh, pray don’t think any more of the occurrence, Mr. Barton,” she answers with a frank smile; “I freely forgive and forget. And besides, I am quite aware of the traditional, and consequently pardonable, prejudice against the stage and all connected with it which exists in country houses. My lamented father was just as prejudiced as anybody else. But come, let me return hospitality for hospitality, and have the pleasure of entertaining you at luncheon—and you too, Mr. Brownlow; you see I remember your name.”

As if quite unconsciously, she takes the squire’s arm and walks towards the gate—the squire completely captured! I follow behind them, and am wondering where Tom has got to, when I spy him romping with a collie dog on the lawn.

“That’s all right,” he whispers.

“Yes,” I answer. “How I wish Sydney would by some extraordinary chance turn up.”

“Oh, wouldn’t it be splendid?” he exclaims. “Think what a fetching curtain it would make.”

\* \* \* \* \*

A delightful hostess Miss Fayncourt has proved herself to be, and has presided at the luncheon board with the grace and dignity of a queen. And now we are all seated in the charming little drawing-room listening to her playing (at Tom’s request).

The squire is seated facing the piano, lost in thought—sad thought, which music has such power to raise. I am seated facing one of the open windows, while Tom faces the other. Looking away down towards the gate, I see it is open, I having neglected to close it as I entered behind our hostess and the squire. Suddenly I start, and then look towards Tom. *He* has also seen what I have seen. But we both hold our peace, and presently a knock comes to the hall-door.

This causes Miss Fayncourt to stop playing for the purpose of listening.

A servant opens the door.

"Is the proprietor at home?" asks a voice which makes both the squire and his hostess start to their feet.

"Yes, sir. Who shall I say?" asks the servant.

"Oh, say the representative of Messrs. Jill and Company, the celebrated rubber-stamp manufacturers."

"My God! that's my Syd's voice!" cries the old man, going towards the door.

The next moment we hear the exclamations of joy and surprise:

"Sydney!"

"Father!"

\* \* \* \* \*

In the words of the young lady novelist, fresh from school, "we will draw a veil over the scene which followed." A scene, or as Tom expressed it, a "*dénouement* of joy,



forgiveness and surprise." However, we have all now recovered our wonted calmness, that is, as far as we poor mad mortals can recover anything, and as we sit enjoying our cigarettes on the lawn, preparatory to bidding our kind and now remarkably animated hostess *adieu*, the squire says:

"I declare, boys, I feel ten years younger than I did yesterday."

"Hear, hear!" Tom says. "You are a regular modern *Faust*, uncle."

And then Syd makes us laugh heartily at his tragi-comical adventures as a rubber-stamp agent."

"Yes, it *must* be a nice game!" Tom cries. "Bring you about fourpence a-day and your tea."

"Oh! it's an awful game," Syd says. "How the hundreds of fellows working at it manage to exist I cannot for the life of me make out. I had a few pounds when I started; but for that I don't know how I should have got on."

“By the way, Syd,” I say, “how comes it that you have been prowling around this district so much lately?”

“Why, how in the name of goodness do *you* know that?” he asks in astonishment.

“Round here—eh?” the squire exclaims; “you never told me that, Phil.”

“Quite forgot it,” I reply, and then turning to Syd, who is casting furtive glances at the actress, I say, “You want to know who told me: Ben Bantim.”

“Oh, yes, he saw me here once or twice I recollect.”

“And why in the name of goodness did you not speak to him?”

“Ah, well, Phil, I was heartsick and did not wish to meet or speak to anybody I knew at Woodbourn.”

“You foolish fellow,” cries Miss Fayncourt. “I wish I had known that you were wandering about here.”

And Syd, with just a little flush on his thin

travel-worn cheeks, goes on: "I'll tell you what brought me down here. One of our travellers who works the East End, told me that this district was practically unbroken ground, and——"

"Unbroken what—eh?" queries the squire. "What's that, Syd—unbroken ground? Were you thinking of going in for farming?"

"No, no, dad," Syd answers laughing; "I use a phrase denoting a place which has not been canvassed. Well, on hearing this, I determined to give it a couple of weeks' trial. I may inform you all that I am now a competent commercial traveller—that means, I have acquired all the cheek, push and blarney required."

"Oh, indeed," smiles our hostess.

"Yes," he proceeds, "when I first began, I used to walk up and down for five minutes or so outside a house, ere I could summon up courage to knock at the door. But *now*—why, I think this was the only remaining

residence within a radius of three miles which I had to call on. Yes, every householder, every servant, and every policeman in the entire district have listened to my lecture on the extraordinary advantages to be derived from the possession of one of our rubber stamps."

"By Jove! we must all have one each ere you resign your post," Tom declares, and Syd continues:

"Seeing this gate open, in I walked and——"

"Here you are," Miss Fayncourt says.

"Yes, Syd," remarks Tom; "in the language of the classics you 'struck a bright.'"

"Struck a *what*, Tom—eh?" asks the bewildered squire, "a bright—eh?"

And then Tom has to explain to his uncle the exact meaning of the mysterious cockneyism.

And now it is time to leave our charming hostess, after she has promised to come and

dine with us to-morrow. Syd lingers a little by the gate, while Tom, the squire and I go on.

“Dear, dear, what a happy old fellow I am, boys,” cries the old man, “and what a Providential occurrence—what a Providential occurrence.”

“Yes,” Tom exclaims, “just like the last chapter in a novel, or the last act of a play.”

“But is it not strange, Phil, our coming to Richmond?” the squire asks.

“Yes,” I say, “passing strange.”

But I don’t tell him it was all planned.



## CONCLUSION.

TWELVE months have slipped away since we found that eminent madman, Sydney Barton, knocking at the door of Victoria Villa, the residence of the celebrated actress, Miss Fayncourt. She is Miss Fayncourt no longer, having been married to Syd at St. George's, amid one of the most fashionable and notable gatherings ever seen within its walls. She has left the stage for good and all, and now reigns as mistress in Woodbourn, the pride and joy of her husband and her father-in-law. Miss Minerva is now residing at Eastbourne, having left Woodbourn the moment she heard of Syd's marriage—and passes her time between scolding her unfortunate maid and visiting her physician.

Fanny was married to the gay and festive Tom about six months ago, and is living with her husband in London, where she can go to a theatre every night in the year, so she ought to be, and is, happy. Tom and she are coming down to spend the autumn with Marie and I.

Oh! little Towers and his wife have returned after a *twelve months'* tour. I suppose they thought it would take quite that period to obliterate the Susan incident at the church door.

It appears from what Carrie has told Marie, that the case stood thus: All the money supplied to Susan, through Towers' solicitor, she spent in drink, nor would she give up possession of her child (Towers wanting to have it properly reared and attended to). Then she began to pay drunken visits to the solicitor's office, and at length the nuisance became so unbearable, that Towers was "reluctantly compelled" to stop all funds.

“I suppose it really couldn’t be helped,” Marie said to me, when she related the above facts. “But it seems so terrible all the same.”

“Yes—the little rascal brought the poor girl to London. I remember her a modest, quiet, hardworking girl, who devoted all her spare time to her father.”

Ah! my dear mad brother (or sister), you see in Susan’s fate a drama which is enacted over and over again year after year. By-and-by, Susan will be found dead in the street, and her child (if it is still alive) will be taken to the workhouse. I wonder what name they’ll give it?

Mrs. Viner and her brother are residing once more in their own home in Berkshire. She has not married—and she never will. Her heart lies dead and buried in a certain grave away outside Calcutta.

And the Duchess of Stanton? She has embraced the Roman Catholic religion, and



having received her money as per her husband's will, has given it to an Irish convent which she has entered—never to appear outside its gates again. So, we have done with *that* wretched, sinful life.

The present duke is still a bachelor, and is supposed, by ladies who know about such things, to be a great catch. But up to this he has not evinced any marked disposition to swallow any bait.

The Tatte-Snarlow girls are married at last, thank Heaven! They were becoming a positive eyesore. They married trade—stocks and shares, or something of the sort—and live in London—another thing to be thankful for!

And now, my dear mad brother (or sister), we must part.—What about myself?

Well, I'm all right and as happy as the day is long. What of Marie? I think I can safely aver that she also is happy. Our marriage has not been a failure—from where I am sitting I can see her bending over a swinging arrange-

ment of pink silk, lace, pillows, and all the rest of it, in which slumbers a regular regulation live baby, who I hope will some day follow his father's footsteps through this MAD WORLD.

THE END.

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